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The original and present state of man :



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THE
ORIGINAL
AND
PRESENT STATE OF MAN,
BRIEFLY CONSIDERED;

WHEREIN IS SHOWN

THE NATURE OF HIS FALL, AND THE NECESSITY, MEANS, AND
MANNER OF HIS RESTORATION, THROUGH THE SACRIFICE
OF CHRIST, AND THE SENSIBLE OPERATION OF THAT
DIVINE PRINCIPLE OF GRACE AND TRUTH,
HELD FORTH TO THE WORLD

BY THE

PEOPLE CALLED QUAKERS.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

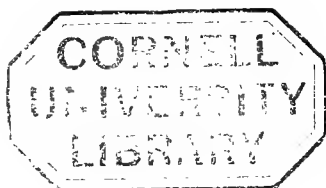
SOME REMARKS ON THE DOCTRINE OF PREDESTINATION,
THE SCRIPTURES, WORSHIP, AND THE
KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

BY

JOSEPH PHIPPS.

We both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who
is the Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe. — 1 TIM. iv. 10.

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P R E F A C E.

IN the year 1767, a person, with a view to disseminate his favourite notions of unconditional election and reprobation, having advanced many sentiments repugnant to the doctrines of Grace and Truth extended for the salvation of mankind universally; and having made an attack upon the Society of Friends for holding those Christian principles of the “necessity, universality, and real sensibility of the work of God’s Holy Spirit upon the immortal soul of man, as the vital source of true religion in him, and therefore the primary guide of his life and conduct;” it induced our friend JOSEPH PHIPPS, from a sense of duty, to appear in print as an advocate for “that Divine principle vouchsafed by a gracious Creator, through a beneficent Redeemer,” to all his rational creatures; and also to defend the Society from unjust imputations attempted to be cast upon it. The first nine chapters are designed to show the verity of our leading principles — the remaining allude to opinions contained in the Treatise of the Opponent; but the controversial parts being omitted, the exposition of Gospel truths in those chapters is very interesting, clearly illustrative of genuine Christianity, and in unison with the whole design of the work.

THE
ORIGINAL
AND
PRESENT STATE OF MAN.

CHAPTER I.

1. Man was originally created in purity, and in a state of due order and rectitude. 2. He was inspired with a sense of his duty; and 3 and 4, empowered to perform it. 5. Being tempted, he lapsed from his proper guard, the preserving power of God, into sin. 6. He fell from the image of the heavenly, into the image of the earthly. How unlawful self rose in him. 7. That he really suffered death in spirit, in the day of his transgression. What the life and death of the soul are.

1. IN the beginning God created all things good. Inherently and immutably good himself, every production of his must necessarily be so, according to the several kinds wherein he created them. As man was wholly made by him, he must have been made wholly good; his nature clear of all impurity, and free from all defect and disorder. His faculties were not imperfect, but limited to their proper sphere, and every part of his composition constituted in its due rectitude: the body placed in subservience to his rational spirit or soul, as to the more noble and excellent, and therefore the supe-

rior part, made for immortality, and in subjection only to the guidance of its Creator.

2. The human faculties or powers of capacity, must then be clear, unprejudiced, and fit to receive impressions, yet void of any but those of immediate sense. Man, merely as man, could not originally bring any real knowledge into the world with him. That must either be immediately communicated to him by his Maker, or afterwards acquired by himself, through observation and experience. The latter required time to effect; and as it was requisite to his situation, that he should be immediately endowed with such an understanding of himself and his Creator, as related to his present duty and affected his felicity, he certainly was, by divine wisdom and goodness, timely furnished with it.

3. Man must not only then be supplied with a due degree of light and understanding, but he must also be empowered to act up to it, else his knowledge would have been afforded him in vain. Yet, though he certainly was thus empowered, the sequel manifested he was placed in a state of probation, otherwise, he could never have been guilty of the least failure; for his Maker being essentially and unchangeably good, must have fixed him in a state of immutable virtue and goodness, had he determined to fix him at all.

4. As the omniscient Creator most certainly foresaw what a subtle adversary man would have to encounter, he as surely furnished him with means

sufficient to discover his snares, and resist his assaults. If Satan was suffered to use his subtlety and influence to deceive him, doubtless he was not only warned, but also endued with a sufficiency of divine light and influence to withstand his attempts, as he kept duly upon his watch.

Nothing but the divine nature can enable any intelligent creature to resist temptation, and act up to the divine will. If therefore any created being is required to keep up thereunto, it must be assisted by divine power so to do. God created man for a purpose of his own glory. To glorify God, and to partake of his glory, man must walk in obedience to his will. Man could neither infallibly know his will, nor constantly perform it, merely by the strength of his own faculties; he must therefore, necessarily, have been assisted by the spirit of God, to enable him to perform his will, and so to obey him as to glorify him, and enjoy a blessed inheritance in him; otherwise, the end of man's creation could not be answered. Hence it is concluded, the first man Adam was made a living soul by the inspiration of the second Adam, Christ, who is a quickening spirit; for "That was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual."* That is, Adam was first created a natural man, and then rendered a spiritual one by the quickening power of the spirit of

* 1 Cor. xv. 45, 46.

Christ, which is the true life, and proper element for immortal spirits to live and move in.

Thus the parents of mankind, in their original uncorrupted state, being fit temples for the Holy Ghost to dwell in, were, as well as the sanctified in Christ afterwards, partakers of the divine nature,* by the internal quickening of divine life. The author of the book of Wisdom observes, that wisdom in all ages, and certainly in the first and purest, entereth holy souls; which wisdom he describes to be the breath of the power of God, a pure influence flowing from the glory of the Almighty, the brightness of the everlasting light, the unspotted mirror of the power of God, and the image of his goodness.† This clearly denotes the spirit of the eternal Son of God himself, and evidently concurs with those parts of the New Testament which declare him to be the power of God, and the wisdom of God, the true light, and life of men, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the image of the invisible God.‡

It was undoubtedly in the light of this pure influence that Adam had such an intuitive discerning of the creation, as enabled him to give names to them according to their several natures. For we read, "The Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air, and brought them unto Adam, to see what he would call them; and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof."§

* 1 Pet. i. 4. † Wis. vii.
John. i. 4. 9. 2 Cor. iv. 4.

‡ 1 Cor. i. 24. Col. i. 15.
§ Gen. ii. 19.

Under this celestial enduement, the sacred impression of the divine image conspicuously appeared in the first of mankind. "In the image of God created he them."*

5. Had man kept in faithful obedience to his heavenly guide, and rejected the efforts of the tempter, he might undoubtedly, in due time, have been advanced to a degree of establishment beyond all possibility of falling; but not continuing strictly upon his watch, and contrary to the warning before given him, turning his attention towards the temptation, when alluringly presented, he slipped from his proper guard; leaving hold of that spirit wherein his life and strength lay, he fell from it, and all its advantages, out of the liberty of the sons of God, into the bondage of corruption: a sure introduction to misery. For as holiness and happiness are inseparably united, so sin and misery are indivisibly connected.

To suppose that the Almighty author of all good, originally subjected man under a moral necessity to transgress upon the appearance of temptation, is an imagination too injurious to the divine character to be admitted. Our first parents were unquestionably enabled by their Maker to abide in due watchfulness, which would have entitled them to preservation; their defection from which, was certainly not of him, but of themselves. Had their lapse been through his will, or intentional disposition of cir-

* Gen. i. 27.

cumstances, so that it must inevitably follow, he could not consistently have sentenced them to punishment for it; because, in so doing, they performed his will, which could not be a sin against him.

A dangerous fondness to become knowing in things hurtful and no way necessary, seems to have had an early entrance into the human mind. "In the day ye eat, your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."* By the suggestion of this flattering falsehood, Eve was deceived. Knowing nothing but good, she might have remained happy; but experiencing evil, she became otherwise. This knowledge is as opposite to that of the divine wisdom, as darkness is to light. It is certain the Omniscient knows both good and evil, but he knows the first by immutable possession and perfect enjoyment, and the last he beholds with abhorrence, in eternal opposition to, and infinite distance from, the purity of his nature. With sinful man the case is reverse; evil having immediate possession of him, and good being out of his reach, without divine mercy, he must be completely wretched. This is the necessary consequence of that boasted knowledge of the world, which men acquire by tasting the pernicious and poisonous sweets of temptation.

6. The consequences of this primary lapse were immediately affecting to the actual transgressors, and remotely to all their posterity. 1. They lost

* Gen. iii. 5.

the bright impression of the divine image, and the felicity attending it. Forfeiting the immediate indwelling and pure influence of God's holy spirit, they lost that divine similitude, wherein they had enjoyed internal light, life, love, goodness, righteousness, holiness, and happiness. That omnipresent spirit of power, truth, and virtue, which in their original state had been their comforter, disunited from them through transgression, now became their accuser and convictor. 2. Lapsing from under due and constant subjection to the mind and spirit of his Creator, the will of man separated from the will of God, and became self-will. Self-love in man was originally and properly placed in subservience to the love of his Maker, who being in all respects justly supreme, had, whilst man stood in cheerful obedience, the supremacy in his affection; but by his undutiful self-gratification, and letting in the suggestion of the tempter, his chief love turned from his Maker to himself. Thus, probably, inordinate self-love and self-will originated in man, and they always stand in a will separate from the will of God, and a spirit contrary to his holy spirit. This mental separation opened an easy road of access for the evil spirit to influence the human mind towards exterior objects, and rendered them the subjects of temptation. By giving way to carnal inclinations, man became carnally minded; and "to be carnally minded is death."*

* Rom. viii. 6.

7. When the Sovereign Legislator first added a positive law to Adam, he predenounced immediate death upon him in case of his transgression; "in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die."* This seems to imply a much deeper and more important meaning than what relates to the body; a meaning more immediately affecting to the rational soul; the privation of a life which before transgression it happily enjoyed, and which, by disobedience, it must certainly lose. What then is the proper life of the soul, and what is the death of that which must for ever exist? Merely to be, cannot be the life intended. It must be, to live in that life which immutably exists only in the divine nature, and which is not to be enjoyed but by partaking of the divine nature, the spirit of him who is the life, and our life; that life the Evangelist declares to be the true light of men.†

This supernatural, spiritual, heavenly power and virtue of the great illuminator and quickener, is the true life of the immortal spirit of man; and the total want and deprivation thereof, is its death. Turning from this to embrace temptation, our first parents did surely, in the day of transgression, deviate from, and die in spirit to that divine life by which they had been quickened. For, it is the spirit that quickeneth or giveth life;‡ and when life departs, death ensues of course. As the body dies when deprived

* Gen. ii. 17. † 2 Pet. i. 4. John xiv. 6. Col. iii. 4. John i. 4

‡ John vi. 63. 2 Cor. iii. 6.

of its animal life, so the soul is left in a state of spiritual death, when that which is its proper life departs from it; saving this difference, that the deceased body remains wholly insensible; but the soul, in the full state of its death, still exists under the unavoidable sense of its guilt and misery. Thus according to Wisdom, man found death in the error of his life.* — “For God made not death, neither hath he pleasure in the destruction of the living” — but, “through envy of the devil came death into the world.”†

CHAPTER II.

1. The Fall of Adam and Eve affected all their progeny, not with guilt, but with infirmity. 2. How this accrues. 3. The state of infants. 4. The common ascendance of the sensitive powers over the rational. 5. How the creature is said, Rom. viii. to be subjected to vanity by its Creator. 6. When arrived to years of understanding, we add sin to infirmity.

1. It appears from holy writ, that previous to our own actual offences, we are all naturally affected by the transgression of our primogenitors. “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”‡ This is not to be understood of the death of the body only; for all come into the world in the image of the earthly, or, void of the quickening and sensible influence of divine life. But this

* Wisdom i. 12, 13.

† Ibid. ii. 24.

‡ Rom. v. 12.

disadvantage, through the supreme Goodness, is amply provided for, and there appears no necessity to conclude, that we all come into the world justly obnoxious to divine vengeance, for an offence committed by our primogenitors, before we came into the world. With what propriety can an infant, incapable of committing any crime, be treated as an offender? The Scripture positively assures us, God's ways are equal * —that the soul that sinneth *it* shall die, and not the son for the fault of the father—that whatever Adam's posterity lost through him, that and more they gain in Christ;† and undoubtedly, his mercy and goodness, and the extent of his propitiation, are as applicable to infants, who have not personally offended, as to adults who have.

2. The immortal reasonable soul of man, in every individual, appears to be the immediate production of its Creator; for the prophet Zechariah, speaking of the great acts of God in creation, asserts, that “he formeth the spirit of man within him.”‡ And in Eccles. xii. 7, we read upon the death of the body, “Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.” The soul therefore, receiving its existence immediately from the perfection of unchangeable purity, can have no original impurity or intemperature in its nature; but being immediately and intimately connected with a sensitive body, and of itself, unable constantly to withstand the eagerness of the

* Ezek. xviii.

† Rom. v. 15 to 20.

‡ Zech. xii. 1.

animal passions after gratifications of a carnal nature, is liable to be so influenced by them, as to partake with them in their sensual indulgences. In this state the descendants of Adam came into the world, unendued with that divine life which Adam fell from. And who can say, this might not be admitted in mercy to all the future generations of mankind? 1st. That each succeeding individual might be prevented from incurring the guilt of repeating the sin of our prime ancestors, and falling from the same degree of innocence, purity and divine enjoyment. 2d. That, by feeling the infirmity of our own nature, and the want of divine assistance, we might become the more sensible of our danger and necessary dependence on our Creator, and thence be continually incited to seek after and cleave to him, in watchfulness, circumspection and prayer, in order to obtain a state of restoration. 3d. That having in part attained such a state, our prudence might be useful towards our preservation and growth therein; since we should certainly be more assiduously concerned, to secure to ourselves a good condition obtained through pains and difficulty, than one we might have been originally placed in without any care or trouble to ourselves.

3. Whatever were the peculiarities attending the fall of the first man and woman, or those consequent upon it, this is certain, that their progeny do not come into the world in that same state of brightness themselves were constituted in after their crea-

tion. It cannot escape the notice of those who have had the care of infants, that the earliest exertions observable in them, evidently arise from the powers of animal desire, and animal passion; how prone these are to increase in them, and to predominate as they grow up, and the solicitude it requires to keep children out of unruliness and intemperance, as they advance to youth's estate; how much too potent their inordinate propensities are for the government of the rational faculty; what pains are necessary to regulate, and often but to palliate them, by a virtuous education, and improving converse; and the impossibility they should ever be radically subdued and ruled, without the application of a superior principle.

4. In the present state of our nature, the sensitive powers take the lead of the rational in the first stage of life, as the soul brings only a capacity, without any real knowledge, or potency, into the world with it. It acquires its knowledge by degrees, enlarging also in capacity to receive it gradually. Every one knows, it is not capable at five or ten years of age, to comprehend the same ideas in the same extent, as in riper and more advanced years. It first becomes impressed with the images of external things, presented through the corporeal organs, and afterwards with those mental ideas inculcated by its primary instructors, whether true or false. Hence the bias of education becomes strong, either to right or wrong, according as the instructions received are

agreeable to either ; and the passions being enlisted in their service, occasionally exercise their warmth in favour of the prevalent idea or impression, however wrong it may be ; unless the mind, through divine illumination, discover its error, and submit to its rectification.

5. Previous to the reception of knowledge, the soul is joined to the body, by the power of its Creator ; who, in consequence of the fall, saw fit it should be so. “For,” saith the Apostle, “the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope ; because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God.”*

The rational soul is here intended by the creature, and properly denominates the man. Herein the true distinction lies, betwixt the human species and creatures of inferior kinds. This descends not with the body from parents to children ; the soul being an indivisible immaterial substance, cannot be generated. The soul of the child never was in the parent, and therefore could never sin in him, nor derive guilt from his transgression. Neither can guilt accrue to it, merely from its being joined to a body descended from him, because that junction is the act of the Creator.

To account a child guilty, or obnoxious to punishment, merely for an offence committed by its

* Rom viii. 20, 21.

parents, before it could have any consciousness of being, is inconsistent both with justice and mercy; therefore no infant can be born with guilt upon its head.

6. Besides our natural alienation from, and ignorance of the internal life of God,* in our fallen state, it must be acknowledged, that all who have arrived to such a degree of maturity as to be capable of receiving a right understanding, and of distinguishing the inward monitions of Truth in their conscience, have also increased and strengthened the bonds of corruption upon themselves, in different degrees, by a repeated, and too frequently an habitual, indulgence of the carnal part, against the sense of duty received; and are more deeply entered into the dark region of the shadow of death, through their own trespasses and sins.† Thus, “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”‡

* Eph. iv. 18.

† Eph. ii. 1.

‡ Rom. iii. 23.

CHAPTER III.

1. The state of man in the fallen nature, and the necessity of his renovation. 2. His inability to accomplish it for himself, and the necessity of Divine assistance thereunto. 3. What moral evil is—that it both may, and must be removed from man, in order to his felicity. 4. Without this, man is not fully acquitted by the one offering of our Saviour at Jerusalem. 5. The spirit of God is absolutely necessary to effect this great work. 6. What perfect redemption from sin consists in—the term world, John iii. 16, is not to be confined to the elect—Christ tasted death for all men without exception.

1. **WHATEVER** we may have derived from our parents, we certainly accumulate to ourselves additional corruption. “All flesh hath corrupted his way upon the earth.”* Every adult person, in his common natural state, must, upon serious introversion, find in himself a proneness to the gratification of self, and the sensual part; an eager inclination at times to forbidden pleasure, an aversion to piety and holy walking, a consciousness of guilt, and a fearful apprehension of the approach of death. Men generally confess they have erred and strayed, like lost sheep, from the salutary paths of virtue and duty; and that, such is their frailty, it is an easy thing for them to fall in with temptation; but hard, if not impossible, effectually to resist it. Nay, even the high rewards promised to virtue and a good life, and the sore punishments annexed to vice and folly, are altogether insuffi-

* Gen. vi. 12.

cient to retain them in the practice of the former, or to enable them to conquer the force of their inclination to the latter. This demonstrates the corruption of their nature; and as "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh;"* so from what lodges or presides within, the exterior practice arises. The corruption in the heart corrupts the actions, manners and language. Hence all the irregularities in conduct, all the profane and untrue speeches, all the common complimentary falsehoods, to gratify the pride and folly of vain minds.

As the origin of evil in man came by transferring his attention and desire from his Creator to the creature, dividing his will from the will of God, and his spirit from the spirit of God; so the continuation of evil in man is by the continuance of this separation, and must abide so long as that remains. In this situation, commonly called the state of nature, we are both unfit for, and unable to enter the heavenly kingdom, which admits of nothing sinful or unclean.† It is therefore absolutely requisite that man should be made holy, in order to be happy. Holiness cannot unite with unholiness; nor can ability arise from infirmity. If pollution can cleanse itself, if evil can produce good, if death can bring forth life; man thus corrupted, debilitated, and deadened, may disengage, reform, quicken, and restore himself. But it is not in the power

* Mat. xii. 34.

† Eph. v. 5.

of man, as such, to extricate himself from the bonds of sin and death. Yet, as impurity is the bar, it must be removed. As sin separates man from his Maker,* man must be separated from sin, or he cannot be reconciled and united to him. Without restoration to a state of holiness, he cannot enjoy the felicity pertaining to that state; for, “without holiness no man shall see the Lord.”†

2. How then shall corrupt man become holy? how shall he, in a state of utter incapacity, enter into and maintain a warfare against his many and mighty adversaries, which beset him within and without? what ability has he to fight his enemy who is already enchained by him? a power too strong for man has got possession; it must be a superior power to dispossess him, to rescue and restore man; and who is sufficient for these things? None but his omnipotent Creator was able to unbind and extricate him. But his will Adam had separated from, his law he had transgressed, his command he had disobeyed, and against him alone he had committed this high offence. Yet, behold the astonishing compassion and kindness of infinite Goodness! an all-sufficient means was straightway provided, for the redemption both of the actual offenders and all their progeny. The eternal Word, the Son, the Lamb of God Almighty, gave instant demonstration of the greatness of divine love and mercy, in then concurring with the Father, to yield

* Isa. lix. 2.

† Heb. xii. 14.

himself up in due time to take the nature of man upon him,* and, by resigning it to suffering and death, to make it a propitiation for the whole species; and also, in immediately, and all along, affording a manifestation of his holy spirit to every man to profit withal,† in order to their present deliverance from the power of sin, and their everlasting salvation from the certain effect of abiding therein to the last, namely, the second death.

That man should, of himself, empower himself to live in the constant practice of crossing his natural inclinations and propensities, is a wild presumption; but that a spirit infinitely good, and more powerful than all his enemies, should so influence, incline, and enable him, is highly reasonable to believe, because absolutely necessary. By the help of God's spirit, man may, like the Apostle, be assisted to keep his body under, and bring it into subjection,‡ before the strength of its passions and affections lessens by decay of nature; which the rational faculty can never effectually accomplish, even under that decay, without superior assistance.

3. Neither the possibility, nor probability, of man's purification and sanctification by the holy spirit, can reasonably be doubted; for, *first*, as physical evil, or bodily pain, has no substantial existence of its own, but is purely incidental to corporeal nature; so moral evil is to the soul, a disorder which it has improperly lapsed into. It is no part

* Heb. ii. 16.

† 1 Cor. xii. 6.

‡ 1 Cor. ix. 27.

of God's creation, nor has any real existence by itself; but is the fallen, defective, distempered condition of beings, once created without intemperature or defect. Evil, therefore, though it be in man, is no constituent part of man, but an imperfection adventitious to his nature, which by an all-powerful principle, he may be recovered from, and his nature restored to a state of fitness for union with his Maker. *Secondly*, uncreated Omnipotence is certainly more able to cleanse, than the creaturely, corrupt, and fallen powers of darkness are to defile; and infinite Goodness must be as willing and ready to effect the first, as limited envy the last.

Did not the sovereign Lord intend man should be made holy, he would not require it; nor would he require it without affording him the assistance requisite to accomplish it, for he enjoins no impossibilities. That he doth require it, the sacred writings sufficiently witness. "God," saith an Apostolic writer, "hath not called us to uncleanness, but unto holiness."* And, "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it, with the washing of water by the word,"† or the purifying efficacy of the holy word, or spirit, which cleanseth the soul as water doth the body, "that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." In another place, he gives this exhortation,

* 1 Thes. iv. 7.

† Eph. v. 25, &c.

“Abstain from all appearance of evil,”* — then proceeds — “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God, that your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” And to encourage them to seek and hope for it, he immediately assures them, “faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.”

4. Vain is that imaginary pretence, that Christ has paid the whole price for us, by which we stand fully acquitted in the sight of God; that we have complete redemption in him without sanctification in ourselves; and that by the external offering up of his body, he hath perfected the work for us, and we are already reconciled thereby. For, was this the real truth, Christ only paid the price of man's redemption, that he might continue in a state of pollution, and practice evil with security; or be justified in breaking the known commands of God, and serving Satan during the whole term of this life. Contrary to this, the Apostolic doctrine is, “His own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness.”† — “He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them.”‡ — “How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?”§ — “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body,

* 1 Thes. v. 22, 24.

† 1 Pet. ii. 24.

‡ 2 Cor. v. 15.

§ Rom. vi. 2, 12, 21, 22.

that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.”—“What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.”

It is true, the apostle saith, “By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.”* But this doth not imply, that his sacrifice perfected those who never came to be sanctified. Applying it to this case, it can mean no more than that such who have so experienced the effectual operation of divine grace, as to become sanctified, have remission by that one offering for sins committed before their sanctification, which perfects their redemption; and also for transgressions after, upon repentance. For sin once committed cannot be undone; present and future obedience is no more than duty; and past offences must still remain against us without forgiveness. Our Saviour therefore, by his sacrifice, manifested the mercy, love, and kindness of God; “by whom,” saith the apostle, “he was set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness, for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.”† Herein he showed, that a door of reconciliation is opened to all men; but those who through unbelief of, and disobedience to divine grace, never experience the work of sanctification, deprive them-

* Heb. x. 14.

† Rom. iii. 25.

selves of that unspeakable advantage; for it is through sanctification that any come effectually to enjoy the benefit of the sacrifice of Christ. That outward offering for all, showed the love of God towards all; and that he stands ready to pardon past transgression, in all who sincerely accept his terms of true repentance and reformation; but our salvation is not completed by that single act only, and the work of redemption finished for us without us. Though Christ died for us, that we might be brought unto glory, yet we are not actually purified, fitted for, and introduced into the kingdom, merely by that one offering. The way to reconciliation was opened by the death of Christ; but we are not saved by his life till we livingly experience the work of salvation in our own particulars.

5. It is always requisite that the means be adequate to the end, the cause sufficient to the effect; therefore as all men throughout all nations, and every generation, originally stand in equal relation to their Creator, have been, and must naturally be in absolute need of his help, in order to purification and salvation, the means afforded, for this purpose must be universal to reach all. It must be a principle of real and powerful holiness and goodness, to change the condition of man from evil to good. It must be omnipotent, to enable him to overcome his adversaries, the world, the flesh, and the devil. Nothing but a spirit superior to all these can effectually cleanse the soul, and operate to the

expulsion and exclusion of those subtle and powerful enemies which continually seek to hold men in the bondage of corruption; therefore nothing but God's holy, universal, almighty spirit can effect this necessary alteration in man, rectify the disorder sin has introduced into his nature; and raise him up from a state of spiritual death, by producing a new and heavenly birth of divine life in him, by which he may be created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works, and restored to the image of God in righteousness and true holiness.

6. Perfect redemption consists, first, in paying the price of ransom; and second, in bringing out of bondage, and setting the prisoner at liberty. Our Saviour paid the first by his suffering and sacrifice; and he performs the last by the effectual operation of his spirit, in the hearts of those who receive him, and resign wholly to him.

None have cause to murmur at, or complain against the dispensations of their benevolent Creator; for in Christ he hath rendered to every child of Adam a full equivalent for the loss sustained through his unhappy fall. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."* I know some alledge, that the *world* here intends not all men, but the elect only. But we find the term *world*, when confined to men, in the New Testament, is used either for all mankind

* John iii. 16.

in general, for the majority of mankind, or for the unbelieving part of it; and where it intends a part of the species, it is often used to signify unbelievers, and to distinguish them from believers, but is never spoken of believers only. Besides, such an acceptance would turn the text into nonsense, for then it must be thus understood; "God so loved the elect, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever of the elect believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." This would imply, that some of the elect would not believe in him, and all the consequent absurdities of that position. But read the text as it stands, and the particle *whosoever*, properly distinguishes the world into believers and unbelievers, or faithful and unfaithful; and shows that God so loved the whole of his rational creation, that he gave all an opportunity of being saved through believing; and if any did not so embrace it, their refusal was the cause of their condemnation, and not the want of God's love, nor of an opportunity of closing in with, and receiving the benefit of it. This the four succeeding verses plainly declare. "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness

rather than light because their deeds were evil. For every one that doth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd."* It is not reasonable to conclude, the *whole world* can mean less than the whole human species.

The apostle Peter saith, "The prophecy came not in old time, or rather at any time, by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction."† This indicates that Christ died not only for those who come to be saved, but also for those who bring destruction upon themselves; otherwise it cannot be understood that, by his sacrifice, he bought, or paid the price of redemption, conditionally for them as well as others. But if he thus bought those who denied him, who yet occasioned their own destruction, it is truly asserted in the full extent of the words, that "He by the grace of God should taste death for every man;"‡ and that "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."§

* John iii. 17, &c.

† 2 Pet. i. 21, and ii. 1.

‡ Heb. ii. 9

§ 1 John ii. 2.

CHAPTER IV.

1. The progeny of Adam not condemnable for his transgression, but their own. 2. The vital part of religion is interoal, and may be experienced by people under every religious denomination, and in every part of the world — Pagans not necessarily excluded from all share in Christ and Christianity; which, 3. Consists not essentially in exteriors, or an imagery of religion, but in being endued with a new nature. 4 and 5. This is certainly and sensibly to be known, through the operation of Divine grace. 6. Christ waits to be gracious at the door of every man's heart, causeth the dead to hear his voice, quickens the observant, and renders them partakers of his heavenly communion.

1. However public a person Adam may be accounted, and however his posterity might, without a Redeemer, have been by any thought chargeable with his sin, though I am unable to conceive how any man should deserve condemnation for what he could not help; yet our Saviour having paid the price of our redemption, by tasting death for every man,* there cannot be any thing chargeable to Adam's descendants, merely on account of his transgression, exclusive of their own. Original sin, therefore, in that sense which implies guilt in them for his offence, I apprehend, has no foundation in truth. Nor, was it really so, could any ceremonious performance of men, or even all the water of Jordan wash it away. All exterior forms, however mistakenly exalted, or celebrated amongst man-

* Heb. ii. 9.

kind, are but outward and visible signs, and altogether ineffectual towards any real change or reformation of the subject. And respecting little children who are taken away before they have personally offended, they cannot in equity be chargeable, but may with just confidence be resigned, as perfectly safe in the arms of their Saviour, who declared, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven;"* and also told his followers, "except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."†

2. The vital part of man's religion and duty stands, principally, in a right attention to, and a faithful obedience of the manifestation of the spirit of Christ in the heart and conscience. He who pays due and constant regard to this, is in his measure a follower of Christ, and has, in some degree, the reality of Christianity in him; live under what mode of profession, or in what part of the world soever he may. For who is a servant of Christ but he that willingly obeys him? Is he who willingly acts according to his verbal precepts, a follower of Christ; and is not he who, without the knowledge of these, with equal willingness follows the leadings of his spirit, also his servant? Of this spirit the truly virtuous and religious amongst the gentiles were, in degree, partakers; "for," saith holy writ, "when the gentiles which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these,

* Mat. xix. 14.

† Ibid. xviii. 3.

having not the law, are a law unto themselves; which show the work of the law written in their hearts; their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another.”*

The words *by nature* here, I apprehend, are not to be understood as if the apostle intended the gentiles became virtuous by any goodness in their fallen nature, which must be the same as all other men's. The context shows, he was here distinguishing between those who enjoyed the ministration of the Mosaic law, and those who had it not; and he useth the expression, *by nature*, in the same sense as if he had said, without an education under the law; and proceeds to show, that though they had it not, yet they practised the substance intended by the law. This showed not, that their own hearts were their law, but as the apostle explains it, that the work of the law was written in their hearts, and that they had a part in the new covenant; in reference to which it is said, “I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.”† Though they were without the law of Moses, they were not without law to God. For, by receiving and retaining the divine impressions in their consciences, they were under the law to Christ, or subject to the manifestation of his spirit in their hearts; and in proportion to their obedience, partakers of the nature of the divine principle within

* Rom. ii. 14, 15.

† Jer. xxxi. 33.

them. By the internal operation of this nature, it was that they became reformed in heart, and rectified in life and practice, so far as they were so; or as the text has it, enabled "to do the things contained in the law." Originally disordered, and actually depraved, their own nature as men could never have led and empowered them to this; for since the primary lapse, it is prone to evil,* and true reformation and religion arise not from that disordered and corrupt ground. They come not by nature, but by grace. They are the fruit of that good seed universally sown in every heart, by the great and good Husbandman for that end. Were it not for the notices and powers communicated by this internal principle, man must have continued to proceed in the increase of corruption, irreligion and misery; as appears too evidently by the conduct of such as disregard it. Not by following their own nature therefore, but by obedience to the inward law of the divine nature written in the heart, the conscientiously virtuous amongst the gentiles, as well as others, were enabled to perform the things, or just morals, contained in the Mosaic law; and thereby to evidence in their measures, the effectual operation and authority of the divine law-giver within them.

The gentiles therefore partaking of the law written in the heart, cannot properly be said to be excluded from all share in the new covenant, or dis-

* Rom. vii. 18.

pensation of the gospel. The gospel, taken in its full extent, is the revelation of the love and mercy, and the offer and operation of the grace of God, through Christ, to fallen man, in his natural and corruptible state, in order to his restoration and salvation. It is not wholly contracted into the mere tidings; but including these, goes deeper, and essentially consists in the thing declared by them; the power of God administered to the salvation of the soul.* By this the outward coming of Christ is rendered truly and fully effectual to each individual. Those who believe in, and obey him in his inward and spiritual manifestations, by which the gospel is preached in every rational creature under Heaven, may come to be partakers of his life, and be saved by him from the second death of eternal misery, though providentially incapacitated to know the exterior history of his incarnation, &c.

That virtuous and devout gentiles were approved of God, appears in the case of Cornelius;† for we find that before his reception of historical and verbal Christianity, his sincere devotion, and reverence towards his Creator, and charitable acts to the needy, “came up for a memorial before God,” who also now taught Peter, verse 15, the gentiles he had thus cleansed were no more to be esteemed common or unclean than the believing Jews, and gave him of a truth, to perceive, “that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation, he that feareth

* Rom. i. 16.

† Acts x. 2, 3, 4.

him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.”*

Hence it appears, that those who conscientiously obey the spiritual manifestations of Christ in them, are internally, though not by outward profession, his disciples and followers, and truly believe in him so far as he is revealed to them; for obedience is the certain proof of a right faith. And I make no question, but those in any part of the globe, who, from invincible obstacles, have not the opportunity of historical Christianity, in their obedience to the spiritual appearance of Christ in their hearts, are accepted, and partake of the benefits of his death. Why should they not be as capable of receiving advantage by the sacrifice of Christ, as disadvantage by the fall of Adam, whilst they are equally strangers to the history of both? But certainly, those to whom the sacred writings are providentially communicated, are under double obligation, since they are favoured with that additional instrumental advantage; and it will tend to their greater condemnation, if they believe not unto obedience. For, however high the profession of such may be, they are but imperfect, superficial, ineffectual believers, who hold with the external part, and experience not the internal: Christians in name, but not in deed and in truth. It is essential to us who have the scriptures, to believe both in the outward coming, and inward ministration of our Saviour;

* Acts x. 34, 35.

resigning to him, and trusting in him, with that faith of the operation of God, which works by love to the purification of the heart, and is the saving faith of the gospel.

Complete Christianity has both an inside and an outside; a profession or bodily appearance, and a life and virtue, which is as a soul to that body. Those who are in possession of both, are complete Christians. Those who have the inward part without the outward, though incomplete in that respect, will in the sight of perfect equity, certainly be preferred to such as have the latter without the former; and it would be well for all who have the history, and profess the Christian religion, yet walk contrary to its requirings, could they change conditions at last with such conscientious gentiles. Let those who are so deeply affected with absurdity, as to believe or imagine, that infinite wisdom, goodness and equity, has confined salvation to such of his creatures as happen, without any choice of their own, to inhabit particular spots of the globe, are formalized after a peculiar manner, or entertain one particular set of articles and opinions, let such duly consider the following texts. "Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel; and I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven; but the children of the kingdom," by education merely, "shall be cast out into outer

darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”* “After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God, who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb! †

3. Real Christianity consists not in the profession of any framed articles of belief, nor in the practice of signs and ceremonies, however displayed with exterior pomp, or whatever significance may be fancifully attributed to them by their supporters. Form and profession make not a real Christian, but the putting on of a new nature. “They that are Christ’s, have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.” ‡ “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new, and all things are of God.” § The necessity of regeneration, the power by which it is effected, and the co-operation of God and man therein, are all included in that text; “If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” ||

4. The new birth is not brought forth in particulars imperceptibly. The new man is renewed in

* Mat. viii. 10, 11, 12.

† Rev. vii. 9, 10.

‡ Gal. v. 24.

§ 2 Cor. v. 17, 18.

|| Rom. viii. 13, 14.

knowledge;* in a certain and sensible experience. The soul in whom it is going forward, has an internal sense of it through its whole progress, and must keep a steady eye thereunto; that it may go forward. "We all," saith the apostle, "with open face beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord."† By looking at the deceitful beauty of temptation, men fall into sin, and by keeping a steadfast eye inwardly unto Christ in spirit, with humble resignation to him, and earnest desire after him, man finds preservation, and gradually advanceth from one degree of grace to another, till he really experienceth a renewal of the Divine likeness upon his soul, and an inward translation out of sin, darkness and death, into Divine light, life and holiness: and thereby, in conclusion, from anxiety and misery, to peace and felicity.

5. The natural man may polish and adorn himself with variety of literature, arts and breeding; but in his best accomplishments, he is but the natural man still, whom the apostle declares, receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, neither can he know them.‡ This is the natural condition of all men, before the work of renovation is begun in them; and seeing all stand in need of divine grace to effect it, and that "God will have, or willeth, all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth;"§ so, "the grace of God that bringeth

* Col. iii. 10.

† 1 Cor. ii. 14.

† 2 Cor. iii. 18.

‡ 1 Tim. ii. 4.

salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us," by its convictions, "that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world."* Thus, "the mighty God, even the Lord hath spoken, and called the earth, from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof."† All personal instructions, and the writings of the prophets, apostles and their contemporaries, taken in their full extent, have never been any thing near so universal amongst mankind, as this grace and power of God; for it always hath been, and is present to every individual in all nations, and throughout every generation.

6. He who is given for a light to the gentiles, and God's salvation to the ends of the earth,‡ not only dispenseth of his grace universally and individually, but even waits to be gracious. "Behold," saith he, "I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."§ This is Christ in spirit, who proclaimeth, He that hath an ear let him hear.

Query. But if man in his fallen estate be dead, how can the dead hear?

Answ. When the Saviour called "Lazarus, come forth!|| the dead was quickened and immediately obeyed. The voice of him who is a quick

* Tit. ii. 11, 12.

† Psal. l. 1.

‡ Isa. xlix. 6.

§ Rev. iii. 20

|| John xi. 43.

ening spirit* is a quickening power. "The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live."†

Query. What is meant by his standing at the door?

Answ. His wonderful condescension, patience and long forbearance, in waiting upon the soul of man, as for an entrance; that as he is a rational creature, he may be prevailed with willingly to open his heart to his Redeemer and receive him.

Query. How doth Christ in spirit knock, or call?

Answ. By influencing the soul in its seasons of quietude, so as to excite inclinations and desires towards good; and also at other times, by distressing it with the painful sensations of guilt and remorse, for its sinful pursuits and practices.

Query. How shall man open to him, and receive him?

Answ. By resigning his attachment to self, and the propensities of sense, and humbly adhering to the voice, or present manifestations of the spirit.

Query. How doth the Lord come in and sup with man, and make him a partaker of his supper?

Answ. When the spirit of Christ is received by the soul in faith, love and due submission, he proceeds by degrees to set it at liberty from the bond-

* 1 Cor. xv. 45.

† John v. 25.

age and influence of corruption; for, “where the spirit of the Lord is,” in possession, “there is liberty;”* and when he hath brought the soul into a proper degree of purification, he sheds the comfort of his love into it, and makes it a partaker of the communion of saints, which is inward and spiritual. This is the true supper of the Lord. He who participates of this, discerns and tastes the Lord’s spiritual body, and experienceth it to be meat indeed, and his blood to be drink indeed.†

CHAPTER V.

1. God’s true and faithful witness in the conscience, a divine monitor and daily preacher to man. 2. It produceth the new-birth in the obedient; and, 3, promoteth its growth in them. 4. This no indignity to man, but the contrary, and of absolute necessity to his ascendance above sublunary considerations. 5. It is not beneath the dignity of the Creator to make man so far the subject of his especial regard, as to enable him to answer the end he created him for. The same power that created, requisite to the support of his creation, and his continual superintendence necessary to mankind.

1. MANKIND are not left to Satan, nor to their own lusts, nor to live without God in the world. A way is cast up. A means is provided. Besides the natural, and traditional consciousness of mere moral good and evil in every breast, God hath a divine witness in the heart of each individual, which will truly manifest right and wrong in the consciences of those who faithfully attend thereto,

* 2 Cor. iii. 17.

† John vi. 55.

afford light and power to set them free from the mists of prepossession and prejudice, and become to them a safe conductor, and an able supporter in the paths of religion and virtue.

What instructor can we have equal to this most intimate witness? A monitor so near, so constant, so faithful, so infallible! This is the great gospel-privilege of every man: the advantage of having it preached day by day in his own heart, without money, and without price, yet with certainty. Is it reasonable to conclude, this nice, true and awful discernor, should be less than divine? Can any person, upon serious consideration, imagine it to be the nature of the fallen man himself? Is there the least probability that any thing so corrupted and clouded, should so clearly and instantly distinguish, and would the heart of man, which is declared by inspiration to be deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked,* so faithfully reprove itself? Would that which delights in its own indulgence, and is impatient of restraint, act in daily control to its own inclinations? Is it the property of evil to do good? Here is a just criterion. That which is natural leads according to nature; that which is spiritual according to the spirit. These are distinguished in scripture by the terms flesh and spirit,† and are truly said to war against each other in man. As sin wars against the spirit to destroy the soul, the spirit wars against sin to save the soul.

Let me query with you who, instead of embra-

* Jer. xvii. 9.

† Rom. vii. 23. Gal. v. 17.

cing in humility, love, and thankfulness, this upright principle as divine, are exerting your abilities to depreciate and revile it. Whilst you confess it distinguishes right from wrong in your own breasts, by its approbation of the first, and rebuke of the last; can you thus acknowledge it to be infallibly good, and, at the same time attribute it to yourselves? "I know," saith Paul, "that in me, that is in my flesh," or belonging to my nature, "dwelleth no good thing."* Is your nature in a better condition than his was? Is there any good thing in yours, yet was there none in his? He confessed he had none as man. I presume you have no more than he had. Whence then this quick and righteous discriminator appearing in your consciences? You will not say, it is of Satan; it must therefore either be of man, or of God. For the reasons above hinted, it cannot be of man; it must therefore be of God. Wonderful is the mercy, and great the advantage to every man, that God himself, according to the scriptures, thus condescends to be the teacher of his people,† by the manifestation of his spirit in every heart; and certainly it ought to be accepted and observed with the greatest reverence and thankfulness.

2. The increase and operation of this living principle becomes a new life in and to the obedient soul, quickening and refreshing it with a sense of divine love, strength, and comfort. This life being

* Rom. vii. 18.

† Isa. ii. 3. and liv. 13. Jer. xxxi. 34.

John vi. 45, and xvi. 13. 1 Thes. iv. 9. 1 John ii. 27.

begotten and brought forth by the holy spirit in the willing mind, is called a birth of the spirit, and being its new production there, it is styled the new birth; and seeing our first parents, immediately upon their creation, were favoured with this spiritual birth in them, and lost it by disobedience; the renewal of it, both in themselves and in their posterity, has taken the terms of regeneration and renovation, or the birth of divine life renewed in man. Being inheritors of spiritual death in Adam, or in the fallen state and nature, we can only be born again to life in Christ, by the power and virtue of his holy spirit who is the resurrection and the life.*

3. Every productive power brings forth its own likeness; the evil spirit an evil birth, and the good spirit a birth answerable to its goodness; and as every natural birth admits of a growth, so doth this spiritual birth in the soul. Our Saviour represents its gradual progression, in those similies of the increase of the mustard-seed, the process of leaven, and the springing up of living water into everlasting life.† The apostles Peter and John also show the several gradations experienced amongst the believers, under the similies of new-born babes, children, young men and fathers.‡ There is likewise not only a progression from the lowest of these states to the highest, but even that of fathers admits of continual advances, as Paul witnesseth; who, though he truly

* John xi. 25. † Luke xiii. 18, 22. John iv. 14. ‡ 1 Pet. ii. 2.

asserted, that the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus had set him free from the law of sin and death,* yet he was sensible of higher degrees of attainment still before him; and therefore, after he had been nearly thirty years in the apostleship, he makes this acknowledgement; “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect, but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”†

4. Those who treat this doctrine, of the necessity of man's being renewed, led and guided by the spirit of his Maker, as a disparagement to human reason, put the highest indignity upon the supreme wisdom, goodness, and power. The dignity of human nature consists not in self-sufficiency. The most exalted created beings neither exist, nor act independent of their Creator; much less man, who in his primitive purity was made lower than the angels.‡ He stands in continual need of divine help; and his true dignity consists in being, by his reason, above all inferior creatures, capable of consciously receiving that assistance, and of being thereby preferred to, and preserved in a blessed union and communion with his Maker. It cannot

* Rom. viii. 2.

† Phil. iii. 12, 13, 14.

‡ Heb. ii. 7.

be any lessening to an inferior, to be directed and guided by a superior being ; especially by the supreme Lord, and sole author of all existence, infinite in excellency, power and wisdom, and immutable in glory. Endued with his spirit in any degree, the creature is raised above the highest elevation of its own nature ; and the more it is clothed with it, the more it is dignified and exalted.

No created being, by its natural powers, can rise above its natural sphere. To reach a sublimer station, it must be assisted by strength superior to its own ; a power equal to the height of its ascent. It is only when the Sun of righteousness sheds forth its quickening beams upon the spirit of man, that the poor worm is capacitated in reality, to take wing and mount above its sublunary limits, towards the regions celestial.

5. Some writers of the epicurean cast, have imagined it beneath the divine greatness, for the sovereign Lord of all, to stoop so low as to make man a peculiar object of his notice and regard. To such as mistake those sure marks of degeneracy, pride and haughtiness, for greatness of soul, this may seem reasonable ; but in him to whom pride is an abomination,* and as distant from his similitude as darkness is to light, it cannot have any place. What it is not below him to create, it cannot be beneath him to regard, proportionally to the end he made it for ; and seeing man was created for a

* Prov. xvi. 5.

purpose of his glory,* and to partake of his felicity, it would derogate from his wisdom and goodness, to suppose he should look upon it as below him to enable man to answer the great ends of his creation; which he could not by any means do, without a competent assistance from his Maker. Pride was the cause of the degeneracy of angels, and its natural consequence is the destruction of peace and felicity to all that entertain it. By being something in our own conceit, attributing any good to ourselves, or aspiring above our place and due order, we centre in pride and arrogance. Created beings may be guilty of this; but it is impossible to that all-perfect existence, who is infinite, omnipotent, and immutable.

This visible world demonstrates it was made by an Omnipotent Power, and is preserved by the same power. Without power it could not be made; and as Thomas Sherlock justly observes, "That which owes its very being to power must depend upon the power that made it, for it can have no principle, of self-subsistence independent on its cause."† What doth not necessarily exist, must both be originally created, and continually upheld by the power that made it. It had no being before its creation. It cannot retain its being against the will of its Creator. Its existence and support stand equally in the power of its Maker; without whom it was nothing, could never have existed,

* Isa. xliii. 7.

† Discourse on Providence.

nor can continue its existence. It was made by his power, is preserved by his power, and upon the withdrawment of his power would dissolve and vanish into its original nothing. There is no medium between self-existence and dependence on its cause; therefore a cessation from it, of the power that made it, is annihilation to it. Thus, as all created things were made, and still subsist solely by the energy of the Creator's will and power, he must necessarily, whilst they exist, be omnipresent with them, in them, and through them; therefore cannot be ignorant of any thing relating to them, nor unconcerned about them, or any part of them.

The continual interposition and superintendence of the spirit of God, was always requisite to man, both to preserve him whilst in innocence, and to recover him from under his fallen estate, by governing the effects of natural causes; and to counteract the wiles, and oppose the influences of the evil spirit. Therefore the great Mediator for, and Redeemer of men, was from the beginning, not only incarnately and corporeally given for a propitiation for the sins of the whole world, to be testified, or verified, in due time; but he was also as universally given, in a spiritual manner, to be a witness, a leader, and commander.* 1. He is spiritually given for a witness, to testify against sin in every breast, by his smittings there for evil con-

* Isa. lv. 4.

ceived or committed. 2. For a leader and commander, to such as pay due regard to his convictions, by turning from iniquity to him that smites them, and cleaving to him in that faith and love he produces in them. These he leads in a cross to all the corrupt nature, and empowers them to follow him in the regeneration. This is the true doctrinal cross of Christ.

CHAPTER VI.

1. Regeneration not only necessary, but really experienced by the primitive Christians. 2. Paul's comprehensive description of this great work. It answers to the original work of creation, and is effected only by the Holy Spirit. 3. An objection against the sensibility of this work answered. 4. The same continued. 5. Who it is that disbelieves it. The renunciation of human reason not required, but the yielding it to an infallible instructor, in order to its rectification and improvement

1. Now, O man! what is the great business of thy life in this world, but to regain thy place in the paradise of God; to secure an everlasting establishment in that inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away?* To accomplish this, thou must be stripped of all that which unfits thee for an entrance. Whatever has been the cause of exclusion must be removed. Whatever can have no place nor habitation there, must be separated from thee, or thou canst not be admitted.

* 1 Pet. i. 1.

That which lets will let till it be taken out of the way. Whatever thou hast in thee or about thee, that thou art attached to, in consequence of the fall, all separate self and the carnal mind, thou must resign, or thou canst never know a restoration. The gospel-axe, the power of the spirit of God, must be laid to the root of the tree of corruption in thee, that it may be extirpated, and the vine of life implanted in its room; that in the heart, where the sinful nature hath spread its poisonous produce, the engrafted word, which is able to regenerate and save the soul, may flourish, and bring forth its heavenly fruits;* from whence arise happiness to the creature, and praise to the eternal author of all virtue and felicity.

The necessity of regeneration was not only preached to the people in the primitive times, but was actually experienced by the believers. A clear and pregnant instance we have in 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, 11, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God; and such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God." Here the apostle plainly testifies, that

* James i. 21.

some of the Corinthian brethren, who had been of polluted hearts and vicious lives, were become regenerated, made clean and holy; and shows this great change in them was wrought in the name, or power of the Lord Jesus, which he explains to be, by the spirit of our God. The apostle Peter concurs with Paul in bearing the like testimony. "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren; see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently; being born again, not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."* To the like purpose might be added Eph. ii. 5, 6. Col. i. 13—ii. 10, 11, 12, 13—iii. 9, 10, with the 6th chapter of the epistle to the Romans, and many other texts.

2. The apostle particularly shows the nature and manner of this work in Romans the viith and viiith; which, for want of a real experience of, many have been led to imagine, were intended by him, as only descriptive of his own condition at the time he wrote them; yet it is manifest, they comprehend
 • • diverse, and even contrary conditions, which himself and others had experienced in their Christian progress, and which it was impossible he should be in at one and the same time; viz. a state of darkness, and a state of light; a state of uncleanness, and a state of purity; a state of bondage, and a state of liberty; a state of life, and a state of death.

* 1 Peter i. 22, 23.

Chapter vii. 5, he saith, "When we were in the flesh," under the dominion of the carnal nature, "the motions of sins, which were" manifested "by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death." Here he refers back to that state of sin and death they had formerly been enthralled in, but were now past; as fully appears by the succeeding verse, which saith, "But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held, that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter." Verse 7, he returns to the former state again, and becomes more particular. "I had not known sin," saith he, "but by the law." Before he became sensibly convicted in his own conscience, where the sense of the law was opened to him, he remained in his first state of natural blindness; yet knew it not to be such, notwithstanding his learned education, and legal strictness. Though dead as to any sense of divine life, yet he was alive in the spirit of the world. "For," saith he, "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died."*

Opposed by the internal administration of the spiritual law, which brought conviction, the sinful nature was afresh excited by the powers of evil, and sprung up as with new life and vigour, to obstruct his escape from it; "for without the law sin was dead."† That is, its nature remained quiet and undisturbed, enjoying its indul-

* Rom. vii. 9. † Verse 8.

gence without interruption, till the law of life was administered against it. Then “the commandment which was ordained to life, I found,” by the resistance of that nature, “to be unto death. For sin taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me,”* or, darkened me, and brought a sense of death over me. It seems to have deceived him at first into a belief that the law brought forth death, because he found a sense of death ensue upon the convictions of this law; but death is the fruit of sin, which is condemned by the law. For saith he, “the law is holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid.”† He found it was that which so violently opposed it that produced death, and occasioned the condemnation of the law to come upon him, which discovered this death in him. This was permitted that sin might appear sin, and that by the convicting force of the commandment it might become exceeding sinful in his view, or be held by him in abhorrence.

He then feelingly expresses the enthralled situation of this convicted, but unconverted state. “The law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.”‡ That is, he found himself as really in captivity under sin, as those are to their purchasers who are sold into slavery. “For that which I do, I allow not.”§ I am convinced it is evil, and would gladly be delivered from it; but notwithstanding my convictions,

* Rom. vii. 10, 11. † Verse 12, 13. ‡ Verse 14. § Verse 15.

am under its power, and unable to extricate myself. "For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do."* Yet, in patient submission and fervent cleaving to God, some consolation attends this awakened condition; for, "If I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man; but I see another law" or power "in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law" or power "of sin which is in my members."† Thus prevented of what I love, and enthralled by what I hate, what a miserable slavery am I in! "O, wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"‡

He then still personating one in this struggling situation, thanks God through Jesus Christ, for having brought him thus far on his Christian course and warfare, that he could will to do good, though yet unable actually to perform it.§ Hence he had a ground of thankfulness, in hope that he who had wrought the will in him, would also in due time perfect the deed by him. In conclusion, he proceeds to show, though this had once been his condition, he now experienced perfect deliverance, from all the perplexing and afflicting circumstances of this, and the several exercising states he had formerly passed through, and had just been giving so lively a description of. "There is therefore," saith

* Rom. vii. 19.

† Verse 24.

‡ Verse 20, 21, 22, 23.

§ Verse 25.

he, "now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus," as he then certainly was, "who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit: For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, hath set me free from the law of sin and death."* This again testifies his deliverance, and answers to that first cited, "Now we are delivered from the law," which condemneth for sin; "that," sinful nature, "being dead wherein we were held, that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter."† With these accords that of Colos. i. 12, 13. "Giving thanks unto the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son."

In the passages above cited from Rom. vii. and viii. the experienced apostle evidently includes a representation of three very different conditions, in their course of progression and state of disparity from each other. First, a natural blind unconvicted state; which is that of darkness and death,‡ answering to the original chaos before light was brought forth. Second, a state of illumination and discovery, of conviction and internal warfare, in order to a complete conversion; which partakes of a mixture, and shows light and darkness in the act of separation, like that in Gen. i. 3, 4, 5. Third, a state of redemption from the power of sin, through

* Rom. viii. 1, 2. † Chap. vii. 6. ‡ Gen. i. 2.

purification, and a translation into the spiritual kingdom of Christ; which is the state of the perfect Christian, and completes the new creation, wherein every thing takes its due place, and moves in its proper order. I now refer it to the intelligent reader, whether it is not an absurdity to imagine, that these three diverse, and in some respects contrary states, should all subsist together at the same time in the same subject.

By this representation, which contains a brief and comprehensive delineation of the work of the new-birth, the apostle shows to such as are young in the faith, what different states they have to pass through in that preparatory travel; and also reminds the regenerate of what they have witnessed, in the lines of his own experience. He describes the various steps, and principal leadings of the holy spirit, till by its effectual operation the soul is rendered a new creature, and introduced into the kingdom of God; which being inward and spiritual, is entered by an inward and spiritual way. Hence it is clear, a man may acquire all the learning, and receive all the degrees that schools and colleges can bestow, with all the authority men can afford him, and may be strict in the practice of all the forms and exteriors of religion; and yet remain the natural man still. These can bring him no nearer to true regeneration, than he was the moment of his birth; for the new-birth is the work of the holy spirit only. Nothing but the spirit of holiness can

make a man holy; for nothing can communicate what it hath not. Nothing can set men free from the power of sin and its wages, death, but the law or power of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, individually administered. This, which turneth sinners into saints by a real purgation, and renders them, as to their inward state, new creatures, remains to be their light and leader, and the primary guide of their life and conduct, by its immediate manifestations in the heart; whereby it frequently brings scripture-truths to their remembrance, and opens the sense of them profitably to their understandings, at the same time influencing the mind to a practice answerable.

3. Evident as it is, that the apostle, in the foregoing scriptures, describes divers changes of condition, which through the operation and effect of the holy spirit, he had certainly known and sensibly felt; yet some have appeared, even amongst the leaders of the people, who acknowledge, "The influence of God's spirit enables us to render him an acceptable service," but assert, that it is in a way imperceptible to us; that the sacred writings are utterly silent concerning any sensible demonstrations of its workings within us; that they cannot be distinguished from the efforts of our own reason; that all pretences to it are suggested by an enthusiastic or distempered fancy; and that there never was a Christian with a cool head, and a sound judgment, that in any instance of a change

of life, would presume to say, which part of his reformation was owing to divine help.

The truly sound reformed Christian knows and acknowledges, every part of his reformation is owing to divine help; and whoever propagate the above-cited anti-scriptural doctrine, demonstrate their ignorance of true regeneration, and that their wisdom is but the superficial wisdom of words; which can only enable them to make a show of knowledge, by talking about the things of God, without any right understanding of them. The pomp of science, and the flourish of eloquence, have no more alliance to truth than the pride of life. They belong to the wisdom of this world, by which God is not to be known; "For the world by wisdom knew not God, nor the things of God."* All the knowledge of the natural man, the man whose nature remains unchanged, whether called Pagan, Jew, or Christian, and whether it be styled philosophy or divinity, is but the ineffectual ideal wisdom of this world: the vaunting head-knowledge. It is not the wisdom from above, by which alone God and the things of God are to be known, that is, experienced. These are out of the reach of arts, languages, and sciences; and are discovered only by the manifestation of the spirit of Christ in the heart. "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."† Yet though the world, by all its admired and celebrated wisdom, knows not God, there

* 1 Cor. i. 21. Ibid ii. 11.

† Col. ii. 3.

is a wisdom communicated by which he is known. "For God," saith holy writ, "who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face" or inward appearance "of Jesus Christ,"* The apostle adds, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels;" we enjoy it now whilst in these bodies of clay, "that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."

This luminous and excellent power operates upon the humble thankful acceptor, so as to open an understanding of what he reads, both in scripture and other experimental writings; often giving him to feel that concerning which he reads, and rendering it of improving effect to him. But he who rejects the means can never attain the end. He who refuses or flies from the light of life, when it offers itself to him by reproof and conviction; not believing it to be of God, nor receiving it as such, stops its operation, prevents it from opening itself to him, and enlarging in him. For the unbelieving heart shuts up its own way,† and therefore remains insensible of the internal power of the Saviour.

4. What man upon earth can say, he has not had convictions? Or, that he has had them without any sense of them? Who could have a sense of them, and not distinguish it from the efforts of his own reason; not distinguish the reprover from the reproof? Unfelt convictions are impossibili-

* Cor. iv. 6, 7.

† Mat. xiii. 58.

Mark vi. 5, 6.

ties. In what manner is the work of renovation known, without any perception of it in its progress? Did the apostle Paul so pathetically describe the painful states he had travelled through, and the opposite powers engaged within him, without ever having a certain sense of them? Or is the coolness of his head, and the soundness of his judgment now to be arraigned; and are his Christian experiences to be treated only as the issues of an enthusiastic or distempered fancy?

How could any witness repentance unto life, remission of sins, and the times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, without an inward sense of them? Were all the cries, the pantings and thirstings after the Divine presence, uttered by the sacred writers, without a sense of that want; and were all their triumphant rejoicings in the consolation of his presence, expressed under a total insensibility of it? Were the kindly fruits of the spirit, and the comforts of the Holy Ghost unfelt by those who enjoyed them? Who can affirm these absurdities? Where can such blind leaders bring their blind followers to? Those who turn their backs on the light must walk in darkness. It is the sole property of the spirit of Christ, the light of men, to make true discoveries to the mind, both respecting itself and every thing else that concerns it. Hence he is rightly styled the Sun of righteousness; the same thing to the soul of man, that the sun in the firmament is to his body. The one is the light

without, the other the light within : and therefore is properly so denominated.

5. It is the unbelieving unrenewed man, unacquainted with the effectual operation of this heavenly principle, that unwillingly rejects and disparages it, and thereby contributes to keep both himself and others in blindness concerning it, and prejudice against it. "The natural man," saith the apostle, "receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him ; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."*

What ! saith the mighty man of reason, must I put out my eyes in order to see ? Must I lay aside and renounce my reason, to obtain a better understanding ? It is impossible, absurd, and preposterous. Very true, and it is equally true, that no such absurdity is required. It is neither right reason, nor the proper use of man's reason, that is objected to and advised against. For right reason is truth, and is ever correspondent with the inward motions of the spirit of truth ; and man's rational faculty is what renders him capable of receiving Divine influence and instruction, without which it is impossible to conceive he could be a fit subject for it ; and was his reason in such a perfect state as to merit the name of right reason, he would not stand in such absolute need of it. But it evidently appears, from the various biasses and prepossessions men are generally under, the weakness and mutability of

* 1 Cor. ii. 14.

their understandings, and the innumerable and irreconcilable differences amongst them, especially the learned and leading part of mankind, that human reason is far from being always agreeable to right reason, which is unchangeably true. What is cautioned against therefore, is the setting up human reason above its due place in religion, making it the leader instead of the follower of revelation, the teacher instead of the learner; and esteeming it vested with a kind of self-sufficiency, independent of the direction and help of God's holy spirit.

We are not required to lay aside our understandings, either in order to, or under the influences of the spirit; but, as prudent and docile scholars, to submit them to the necessary instruction and improvement of that infallible Master of infinite wisdom and knowledge, who is the universal teacher of his people;* that we may be enabled rightly to obey and worship him with the spirit, and with the understanding also.† The spirit of God and a right understanding must infallibly concur.

As the light of the sun is so agreeably dispensed by the sovereign wisdom, that it doth not put out or blind men's eyes, but assist to the proper use of them; so the Divine illumination and influence is administered by the same wisdom, in such due degrees, that it neither banishes man's reason, nor deprives it of its utility; but restores it to its full

* Isa. liv. 13. Jer. xxxi. 34. John vi. 45. Heb. viii. 10, 11. and x. 16.
† 1 Cor. xiv. 15.

and proper use in religion, by dispelling the fogs of prejudice and passion, giving it a clear sense of duty, and furnishing ability to perform it. The holy men of God were not deprived of their understandings, when they spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,* but found them illuminated and highly improved by it. They were not used by the spirit as senseless machines, nor remained as vegetables, imperceptive of the virtue arising in, and enlarging them. Their faculties were brightened, and raised to a higher pitch of usefulness, than could ever have been reached by them whilst unassisted by the power of Divine grace. With good reason, therefore, hath one of the inspired writers given this necessary exhortation; "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding."† And he further saith, "He that trusteth in his own heart, is a fool."‡

* 1 Pet. i. 21.

† Prov. iii. 5.

‡ Ibid, xxviii. 26.

CHAPTER VII.

1. Whence true religion ariseth 2. How God is to be known according to the new covenant. Of whom the body or church of Christ is composed, and the life it enjoys. 3. Whence this life is received. 4. That which brings forth the new-birth must maintain it. 5. True religion always essentially the same. Exterior institutions only super-additions to lead the darkened and degenerate towards it. 6. Man has no pretensions to merit, but through faithfulness, is graciously allowed a filial claim. 7. The nature of God's covenants with man.

1. NOTWITHSTANDING too many are taught to imagine importance and efficacy, in mode, ceremony, sign and shadow, the mint, anise, and cummin of the legal dispensation; yet it is certain, that in "Jesus Christ, neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love."* Neither the practice, nor disuse of forms and rituals, are of any availance with God. But the first may more than unprofitably busy their practisers, if they are so dangerously deceived as to place confidence either in their own performances, or those of their leaders. The religion of the true Christian consisteth not in form, but substance; and ariseth not from the activity of human reason, imagination, or opinion, but from an heart-felt sensation of Divine love in the light of life. Its foundation is no less than the immediate administration of God's holy spirit to the spirit of man. This shows unto man

* Gal. v. 6.

what his thoughts are;* what himself, and what the Lord is, so far as properly concerns him. It opens the understanding and directs the duty of the obedient; "for the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."† It is the light of the Lamb which showeth the way of salvation; the one great light appointed to rule the day or spiritual dispensation of Christianity; wherein the nations of them which are saved must walk.‡

2. Men in their natural state may, by reading and study, collect abundance of notions concerning the Supreme Being; but as light discovers all things, yet cannot be really known but by its own appearance; so God, who, in the most perfect and superlative sense, is light,§ can only be truly known by his own immediate manifestation. What is ordinarily called the knowledge of God,|| is but a series of apprehensions concerning his essence, his attributes, and his providence; but what our Saviour called so, is the real experimental sense of his life. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Truly to know him is to participate of the quickening sense of his life, through the communicated influence of his eternal spirit. Thus to know him, is to partake of the new covenant, or true gospel dispensation; for therein it is declared, "They shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest of

* Amos iv. 13.

† Jer. x. 23.

‡ Rev. xxi. 14.

§ 1 John i. 5.

|| John xvii. 3.

them.”* Accordingly the living Christian has a certain sense of Divine life in his own breast, which affords him instruction, strength and comfort ; in such a manner, as he waits in faithfulness upon it, that he is under no absolute necessity to lean upon the teachings of other men ; yet when they come in a degree of the same life, he accepts them as instrumentally from God.

This life of God in Christ is the very soul of Christianity ; without which the best forms and highest professions are but as members of a dead body, unavailable and unacceptable. “He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the son of God hath not life.”† “Because I live,” saith he, “ye shall live also. At that day, ye shall know, that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.”‡ It is because he lives in, and communicates of his life to his spiritual followers, that they live also. Of these the true church, the adopted body of Christ under all denominations, is composed. These alone are his peculiar heritage or clergy. This ecclesiastical body of Christ, is a living body, rendered such by the inspiration of his life. He is the life common to all his true members.§ By his vital influence he communicates a living sense of truth to them, inclines them to himself, and inspires them both with the desire and power of obedience ; and as they advance in faithfulness, he favours them with increasing tastes of Divine grace and love, the sa-

* Jer. xxxi. 34.

† 1 John v. 12.

‡ John xiv. 19, 20.

§ Col. iii. 4.

vour of the holy unction, and the indwelling virtue and glory of his heavenly presence. "There is one body, and one spirit."* Was there not one and the same spirit throughout the whole church, it could not be one body, nor a living body. "Non potest vivere corpus Christi nisi de spiritu Christi,"† saith Augustine; that is the body of Christ cannot live but by the spirit of Christ. He who partakes not of the same spirit with the head, is no true member of the body. His spiritual influence is the precious blood, or spring of life which renders all his members living, and what gives life gives a sense of that life; but though their life is most surely known to themselves, it is hid with Christ in God,‡ from the knowledge of those who remain unquickened by it; and hence ariseth all their opposition to it.

3. We are all by nature strangers to this Divine life, and we cannot by any means obtain it for ourselves. It is not of man's acquirement, but God's communication; and as far out of the reach of the most learned, as of the most illiterate. It is hid from the wise and prudent, in their own eyes, and revealed to those who are as babes, to the world's wisdom. It is not the high learned, but the humble that God teaches, and the meek that he guides in the paths of truth and judgment. Every one's eye therefore ought to be humbly to God alone, and not to be fixed upon the wise, the scribe, the disputer of this world; for God hath, by the powerful simpli-

* Eph. iv. 4.

† In Joh. Tract 26.

‡ Col. iii. 3.

city and purity of his gospel dispensation, made foolish the wisdom of this world.* Yet so fond is the world of its own wisdom, that it has in great measure detruded the cross of Christ, and true spiritual religion, and erected and supported this idol in its room. After this image the world has wondered; and indeed it hath been a means wonderfully to blind, ensnare and deceive its worshippers, whose faith stands in the wisdom of men, and not in the power of God,† and is therefore the reverse of the faith of the gospel.

4. From a due consideration of the debased and corrupt state of mankind, since the fall, and of the great and good end of their creation, it must evidently appear, that regeneration hath ever been the one thing needful; a work essential for all to experience. And as the birth of the spirit cannot be brought forth by any thing but the spirit, so it must also be preserved in its growth and accomplishment by the spirit. Hence the abiding, or indwelling of the spirit, remains to be of absolute necessity to the regenerate; that as their souls are quickened into the Divine life by it, they may continue to live, move, and have their being as Christians therein, and be sustained in a spiritual union, and blessed communion with their Maker.

5. The essentiality of true religion hath ever been the same, primarily consisting in the life of God being raised up, and the love of God shed abroad

* 1 Cor. i. 20

Cor. ii. 5.

in the heart, operating therein to its renovation, and to every virtuous and benevolent end. Whatever of externals or ceremonials have, at sundry times, been super-added by Divine direction or command, were not intended to alter, or unsettle men from due and constant attention to vital, spiritual religion; but when they were become greatly degenerated from it, and darkened concerning it, the merciful Creator was pleased, by means suited to their estranged and carnal condition, to point it out to them, and lead them by signs and symbols towards it. Thus the Mosaic law was not meant to be the whole of religion to the Israelites,* or to supersede the internal religion of grace; but only to be as a schoolmaster to bring them to Christ in spirit, in whom all is included and fulfilled, and whose presence was then with the faithful amongst them, who had spiritual communion with him; for, according to scripture, "they did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them; and that rock was Christ."†

It is a vain thing to imagine, that religion ever wholly consisted in mode or form; or that the all-perfect Lord at any time dispensed with the substance for the sake of the shadow; ever made any alteration therein, by diversity of institutions, from arbitrary will and pleasure, merely to exercise his sovereignty, as though power was a darling attri-

* Gal. iii. 24.

† 1 Cor. x. 3, 4.

bute, and more regarded by him than wisdom, righteousness, and goodness; or as though his attributes could be divided in him. No; he is God and changeth not. His law is his own spirit of eternal rectitude, and his retribution according to every man's state and works. The different modifications that have appeared amongst men in point of religion, have been occasioned by the different alterations in the conditions of mankind. The all-wise God hath directed some for a time, in condescension, for the good end above-mentioned; and divers combinations of men have invented and enjoined abundance more, according to their own carnal misapprehensions of spiritual things, or to advance their own sinister purposes.

Exterior forms are but temporary matters. They are no essentials of true Christianity. The great author of it represents it as a well of water in man springing up into everlasting life.* It radically ariseth from a living, abiding, increasing principle in man, of a pure, spiritual and heavenly nature. As this is cordially embraced, it enlarges in the soul, expels the works and power of darkness, and produceth its own genuine fruits of humility, self-denial, patience, resignation to God, and trust in him alone; righteousness, holiness, meekness; gentleness, temperance, goodness, brotherly-kindness, charity. It derives its origin from heaven, and leads to heaven. It carries the soul out of all formalities and false

* John iv. 14.

rests, up to the Supreme good himself. It breaks down all our own self-will, and brings into perfect resignation to the Divine will. In this humble contrited frame, and no other, can we sincerely and truly say, thy kingdom come ! thy will be done ! For whilst our wills stand in separation from the will of God, we cannot address him in these terms with propriety ; or in spirit and truth.

6. The pride of man is naturally averse to this abased and broken situation. It knows not how to submit to be, or to think itself, nothing ; though it is worse than nothing. It would fain erect and plume itself upon some importance, some estimation, or deserving of its own ; yet all its pretences to merit are false and vain. Man being nothing as such, but what God has made him, and possessing nothing but what he affords him, is wholly God's, and not his own ; and is therefore in duty bound to walk in obedience to him, every moment of his life, which is given him for that end. And seeing man has fallen short of his duty, and hath sinned against his sovereign by disobedience, it is neither in his power, by any thing he can perform, to merit heaven, nor to purchase remission for himself. He can neither undo what he has misdone, nor render to his Maker an equivalent for the trespasses he hath committed against him. But such is the merciful goodness, and free grace of God towards his helpless creatures, that he offers both forgiveness and felicity upon the most reasonable terms of re-

penitance and amendment. To the willing and obedient, to him who is faithful unto death, to him that overcometh, through divine assistance, are the promises of eternal life. Upon the foundation of these free and voluntary offers of the divine goodness, and man's compliance with the conditions, stands his title. "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."*

7. The laws and requisitions of God to man are in scripture often styled covenants. Not meaning that man has personally bound himself, on his part to perform the conditions, but that he is really in duty as deeply obliged, and as firmly bound to do the will of his Creator, as if he had voluntarily bound himself in the strongest obligations possible. The reason is, man owes his very being, and all the good he receives, spiritual and temporal, to his Maker, to whom he stands indebted for all, and who therefore hath an unquestionable right to claim all affection, gratitude, and obedience from him; and more especially as it is all for his own everlasting advantage. There is also an internal spiritual covenant, a Divine connection, which the heart of man feels, in his faithfulness to his Creator. The spirit of life in Christ Jesus, which sets free from the bonds of sin and death, and unites the soul to its Saviour, in the powerful covenant of Divine love.

* Rev. xxii. 14.

By this, through faith, it becomes engrafted into Christ; and by obedience it remains in him as a branch in the vine; or is incorporated with him as its head; for “he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit”* Of this vital union regenerate souls have a certain sense, in proportion to their progress. “Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his spirit.”†—“Hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the spirit which he hath given us.”‡ Hence it is clear, that the gift of the spirit communicates this intelligence.



CHAPTER VIII.

1. Religion the same both to the learned and unlearned.—The Holy Spirit requisite to every man, as the universal reformer. 2. It was such to the Israelites, and, 3. The best part of their Divine legation. 4. Why statutes of an outward and temporary nature were added. 5. They are taught to look through them to Christ, of whose spirit they partook. 6. But it was not dispensed to them in that degree of purity and splendour with which it broke forth at the Christian æra. 7. How this was witnessed to by the law. 8. How by the Prophets. 9. The spirit was in all ages administered, and the truly humble favoured with its indwelling.

1. RELIGION here, and salvation hereafter, are as much the concern and duty of the illiterate and ignorant, as of the wise and learned. And as those

* 1 Cor. vi. 17. † 1 John iv. 13. ‡ 1 John iii. 24.

are by much the greater number, religious duty must undoubtedly consist in something equally attainable and practicable by all; for God is no respecter of persons. It cannot lie essentially in literal knowledge, nor in any peculiar mode of education; for these are the lot of few, in comparison of the whole of mankind. Happiness being the end of man's creation, and the universal indispensable concern of every man, the effective means of regeneration and salvation must be attainable by every man. Nothing but the omnipresent and all-effective spirit of God can be this means; for nothing else is universal, nor any way adequate to the work. The spirit of God therefore, being necessary to every man, is afforded to every man, by him who withholds nothing necessary.

This holy operative spirit, Solomon, under its influence, with great propriety, styles wisdom, and represents it, in familiar language, as calling upon mankind, to turn at its reproofs,* with a promise, to pour out its spirit unto them. He also impleads those as fools who reject or slight its reproofs or convictions in their consciences; by which he shows, it accompanies them even in the streets and places of concourse.† Recounting the great works of this spirit of wisdom, he elsewhere testifies, “She preserved the first formed father of the world, that was created alone, and brought him out of his fall.”‡ She was not only his preserver before his fall, but

* Prov. i.

† Verse 20, 21.

‡ Wisd. x. 1.

his re-quickener and restorer out of that death, he through transgression fell into; and seeing the whole rational progeny of Adam are naturally under the like necessity of being born of the spirit, its administration is offered to all, in due degrees; and every individual in all ages, who has experienced the new birth, by which right reformation is wrought, have known it to be effected by the operation of the spirit. This the wise author above cited witnesseth, in his acknowledgement to Almighty goodness; when he saith, "Thy council who hath known, except thou give wisdom, and send thy Holy Spirit from above? For so the ways of them who lived on the earth were reformed, and men were taught the things that are pleasing unto thee, and were saved through wisdom."*

2. Evident tokens of internal religion, and the immediate manifestations of the spirit for that end, appear throughout both the Old Testament and the New. Before the flood, the old world was favoured with the manifestation of the Holy Spirit, as is implied in Gen. vi. 3. "My spirit shall not always strive with," or rather in, "man," for so Hebrew scholars say it ought to be rendered. And indeed, where could the spirit so properly strive as in the soul of man, where the seat of corruption is, and to which the suggestions of evil are applied? And to what end should it strive with them, but to bring them to repentance and reformation, and to become, through

* Wisd. ix. 17, 18.

their obedience, the kingdom, or ruling power of God in them.

Renovation of heart by the Holy Spirit and its genuine fruits of repentance towards God, faith in him, and obedience to him, were the principal and essential part of religion also among the Israelites. Duet. xxx. 10. Moses represents the conditions on the performance of which they should be entitled to the promises. "If thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes, which are written in this book of the law, and if thou turn unto the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul." These are the terms; first, that they should keep the law; this was the external and legal part of their duty. Second, that they should turn their whole hearts and souls to God; this was the internal and evangelical part. He leaves them not here in a state of uncertainty, but proceeds to show them to what their inward attention should be turned. "For," saith he, "this commandment which I command thee this day," or this which I command thee to turn thine heart unto, "is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven that thou shouldst say, who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it and do it! Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldst say, who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it and do it, but the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart,

that thou mayest do it.”* The apostle assumes and explains this passage, Rom. x. 6, 7, 8. “The righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, “Say not in thine heart, who shall ascend into heaven? that is to bring Christ down from above. Or, who shall descend into the deep? that is to bring up Christ again from the dead. But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart. That is, the word of faith which we preach.”

By this explanation of the apostle it appears; 1st. That, besides the law, Moses then preached to Israel the same word of faith, which himself and his evangelical brethren did. 2d. That this word is Christ in spirit, calling for attention and obedience in the heart, or conscience of man, in order to effect his restoration and salvation. 3d. This is not a local, or temporary, but an inward visitation of the Saviour of mankind, by his spirit in the heart.

The word of faith is the word of truth, the word of the everlasting gospel; and not a composition of letters. The term word, like many other words, is used in various senses; as a speech or saying, an engagement, a report, a command, an exhortation, an instruction, &c., because these are composed of words. And as men use to convey their sense to one another by words, so God conveys his to men by Christ, who is peculiarly and emphatically styled in scripture the word of God;† and as the way men

* Wis. ix. 11, &c.

† John 1, and Rev. xix. 13.

receive words from the mouths of one another is by hearing, so the manner by which the soul receives internal instructing, reproof, &c., from the Holy Spirit, is metaphorically called hearing. Thus faith, which is the gift of God, is said to come by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.* That is, I apprehend, the internal sense itself is opened in the soul, as well as subjects communicated by the spirit of Christ.

3. Hence we see, the Divine legation to the Jews, consisted not in the outward written law only. Nor were they kept in ignorance of inward spiritual religion, or of a future state of rewards and punishments. For, if so, to what purpose did Moses press the consideration of their latter end upon them with so much fervency? "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!"† What material consideration should their latter end, or time of death, be of, to such as knew no better but that it would be the period of their existence? Or, why should he command their attention to the living word of faith, Christ in the heart, as well as to the written code? He was an eminently inspired prophet, and well knew that salvation is by Christ alone; and that his inward spiritual law is as preferable to the exterior one, as the substance is to the shadow. Obedience to the outward temporal law, had outward and temporal promises; but obedience to the inward spiritual

* Rom. x. 17.

† Deut. xxxii. 29.

law hath promises of an internal and eternal nature. By the works of the first no man could be justified; but by the operation of the last, sanctification is wrought, and salvation experienced. Moses was a type of Christ, and the temporal law with its temporal rewards, a type of the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, and its eternal recompense.

4. But it may be queried, if the spiritual law was always afforded, what occasion was there for the addition of temporal statutes? Answ. The Israelites by living under servitude to a most superstitious and idolatrous people, were become prone to superstition and idolatry themselves; "They were mingled among the heathen," saith the Psalmist, "and learned their works; and they served their idols, which were a snare unto them."* Out of this idolatry they were to be brought, and by their obedience to the only true God, were to become an example to the nations round them, to influence their return likewise. Though all had the word nigh in the heart, yet having lost the right sense of what it is, the law was added because of their transgression and corruption, till the coming of Christ in the flesh†

Seeing their habitual attachment to the forms and superstitions of paganism, was too strong to admit of their being willingly and clearly brought out of them at once, divine wisdom condescended to meet

* Psal. cvi. 35, 36.

† Gal. iii. 19.

them in the state they were in, and to proceed gradually with them, by allowing them some forms and ceremonies like to those they had been inured to; but more regular and significant. The Supreme Lord of the universe first observes to them; "I am the Lord thy God which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage;" and then commands, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."* Thus he draws their attention off from the idols of the heathen, and places it wholly upon himself, as the sole object of their adoration and obedience. And to give one instance for all; as the heathens, whose manners they had imbibed, were accustomed to swear by their false gods, he did not see fit to prohibit all solemn oaths at once, but confined them to swear by himself alone, exclusive of the pagan idols; not requiring the perfect practice of the Christian precept, swear not at all, neither by heaven, nor by earth, nor by any other oath, of them, whilst not in a Christian state, nor under its clear dispensation; but only entering them into the path appointed for them towards it, and to prepare the way for its establishment. Thus he made the law a temporary expedient, to bring them gradually towards the practice of that perfect religion he intended in due season to introduce, and to set up in its purity, for all men to come into, and to walk in.

5. In the mean time, the sovereign wisdom was

* Exod. xx.

pleased to sound an alarm, and set up an ensign to the rest of mankind, amongst the descendants of Israel. He wrought wonders for their deliverance and support; and, besides many excellent moral precepts, dispensed to them a form of knowledge and of the truth in the law;* symbolically denoting the nature and manner of redemption and salvation through his Son, by many significant types, allegories, and similitudes, accommodated to the religious modes and apprehensions they had espoused; which, though semblances of a distant, because of an exterior kind, yet were intended, and wisely adapted, to be to the superstitiously disposed, as a schoolmaster† to lead them gradually to Christ. That is, to the knowledge of Christ; then to come outwardly as a propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of mankind, and also to the knowledge of Christ within, the hope of glory, as the actual sanctifier and Saviour of men. For though they were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud,‡ or dipped into his exterior dispensation as under a veil; yet the spiritually-minded amongst them, were enabled to penetrate through the veil to the internal reality, and “did,” as before observed, “all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ.”§

Still further to assist them, Divine goodness, at times, inspired divers of the most regenerate, and

* Rom. ii. 20.

† Gal. iii. 24.

‡ 1 Cor. x. 2.

§ 1 Cor. x. 2, 3, 4.

most devoted of both sexes with the spirit of prophecy; and engaged them to preach the necessity of righteousness and holiness to them: and to direct their view, through the figures and outward similitudes of the ceremonial law, to the truth signified by them, and plainly to instruct them in, and exhort them to inward and spiritual religion; which was the ultimate intent of the Mosaic, and every other dispensation of God to mankind. For the rituals of the law were not intended to supersede but to serve as an index to the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus.

6. I do not apprehend, that the mystery of godliness, and its internal life and virtue, was ever intended by Divine wisdom to be concealed from mankind; but was always held forth, though sometimes obscurely under typical forms; on account of the number of degenerate minds, who were too much prepossessed and darkened, to behold the splendour of the gospel in its clear manifestation. For, throughout all generations, to as many as rightly received Christ, he gave power to become the sons of God;* yet the spiritual powerful gospel of our Lord, was not so publicly promulgated, without some kind of ceremonial shadows, till the full display of the Christian dispensation, at the time of the Jewish feast of Pentecost: when the disciples, waiting together in obedience to the command of Christ, were, according to his promise, baptized with his

* John 1, 12.

one true permanent baptism; that of the Holy Ghost, which fulfils and supersedes all other baptisms, and remains the standing ordinance of God to his church forever. Then by revelation was the mystery conspicuously and powerfully disclosed; "which," saith the apostle, "in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as," or in the same degree "it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets, by the spirit; that the gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel."* "For now the righteousness of God without the law, is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets."†

7. The law witnessed to the gospel; 1st. By its various offerings and sacrifices; pointing out, and keeping in remembrance, that the Messiah should come in the flesh, in order "to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."‡ This was the real use of the sin and trespass offerings; for, "It is not possible, that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins."§ No; they had reference to the precious blood of Christ, both corporeal and spiritual; who, "by one offering, hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified;"|| thereby putting a final period to the legal sacrifices. 2d. The law witnessed to the gospel, by its divers sprinklings, washings and purifications, which had no more efficacy towards the removal of sin and guilt, than the blood of bulls and

* Eph. iii. 5, 6.

‡ Ibid, x. 4.

† Rom. iii. 21.

|| Heb. x. 14.

‡ Heb. ix. 26.

goats; but must be understood to denote the necessity of real holiness, and to signify the spiritual administration of Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us, not only from guilt and condemnation, but also from all iniquity, the cause of them; and purify unto himself a peculiar, or sanctified people, zealous of good works.* This he doth by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.†

8. The prophets witnessed to the gospel, 1st. By their predictive declarations concerning the coming, sufferings, and offices of the Messiah. 2d. By instructing the people in the necessity of internal, essential, effectual religion, in preference to the written law, even during the time that stood in force; as that weightier part and superior duty which ever necessarily remains throughout all generations.

Samuel saith, "To obey is better than sacrifice."‡ Hosea, "I desired mercy, and not sacrifice," or not in comparison with it, "and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings."§ David acknowledges to the Lord, "Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it: Thou delightest not in burnt-offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."|| In his pathetic address to the Almighty, verse 6, he saith, "Thou desirest truth in the inward parts;" and verse 10, he prays, "Create in

* Tit. ii. 14.

† Ibid, iii. 5.

‡ 1 Sam. xv. 22.

§ Hos. vi. 6.

|| Psal. li. 16, 17.

me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me." Micah queries, "Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"* And then answers: "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God?"† Moses exhorts the children of Israel, to circumcise the foreskin of their heart; and told them, "The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul."‡ Here he showed them, though they had received the sign of circumcision,§ the reality most required was that of the heart in the spirit; which is the work of regeneration, the Christian circumcision of the apostle; who asserts, "He is not a Jew who is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is of the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter."|| He also observes to the Colossians; that in Christ they were circumcised, "with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ."¶

That the necessity of the knowledge and love of

* Micah vi. 7, 8.

† Deut. x. 16.

‡ Ibid. xxx. 6.

§ Rom. iv. 11.

|| Ibid. ii. 28, 29.

¶ Col. ii. 11.

God, and of a change from sin to holiness, by the internal circumcision of the spirit, was both taught and pressed upon the Jews, as that without which the observance of the law would little avail them. Nay, the prophet Isaiah* plainly shows, that the latter without the former, rendered the practice of it, though Divinely instituted, abominable even to its institutor.

9. Regeneration, or the circumcision of the heart in the spirit, being always required, the spirit by which alone it is wrought must have been always dispensed to mankind for that end. This is the gracious gift of the Father Almighty, through the Redeemer; to whom the Psalmist saith, "Thou hast ascended on high; thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts for men; yea for the rebellious also; that the Lord God might dwell among them."† This was the blessed experience of those that humbled themselves under his mighty hand. "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit; to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."‡

* Isa. i. 11, to 19. and chap. lxvi. 3, 4. † Psal. lxxviii. 18.

‡ Isa. lvii. 15.

CHAPTER IX.

1. The Mosaic law a new form of Theocracy, therefore introduced by miraculous appearances. The abolition of the law, and the setting up of the gospel in its genuine purity, were necessarily attended with equal demonstration of the like wonderful powers. 2. All the primitive ministers had the spirit, but their gifts were different. All were not workers of miracles, therefore these were extra powers, not essential to an inspired ministry. Inspiration always requisite to true ministry; but miracles not. 3 and 4. Miracles were temporary sanctions requisite to the abolition of the law, and institution of the gospel, but not essential to be continued for its support. Yet under all dispensations, at times were occasionally wrought. The want of them no proof a minister is not inspired. 5. The institution of Christianity once confirmed by them, the future promulgation of its doctrine stands not in need of their continued repetition. The excellency of the gospel consists in its being a ministration of the spirit, clear of all exterior signs and shadows. 6. True Christians are baptised by one spirit into one body. 7. The primitives not opened at once into the perfect clearness of the gospel, but gradually enlightened. 8. Hence many professors to this day, mistake the first initiatory mixture for the complete state of Christianity. 9. This consists in the total removal of outward signs and shadows, and the clear shining of the Sun of Righteousness itself. The vanity of superseding this by human learning.

1. AFTER the wonders of creation and providence were displayed, in producing and establishing the stupendous system of external nature, its great author was pleased, at distant periods, to show forth the visible effects of his miraculous power, amongst the sons of men; but when the time came wherein he saw fit to recall the degenerate world from the corruptions it was immersed in, by a public assumption and manifestation of his

own just dominion amongst a people chosen for that purpose, he raised up the children of Israel as an exemplar to the rest of mankind. He brought them out of their Egyptian bondage by an high hand, and through many admirable strokes of his power; and upon his institution of the Mosaic law, which being the introduction of a new form of Theocracy, unknown to the world, it was requisite it should be attended by such extraordinary marks of Divine authority, as might be sufficient to authenticate and enforce it, as coming from himself. He, therefore, on that great occasion, appeared to the Israelites in a manner answerable to his Almighty sovereignty; and also to the nature and solemnity of that law; which, being a ministration of condemnation, was ushered in by the most dreadful and astonishing tokens of terror; with thunderings and lightnings, blackness, darkness, and tempest; the mountain flaming with fire, the alarming sound of the trumpet waxing louder and louder, and the voice of words so terrible, that not only the people, but the whole mountain quaked exceedingly. This being an obvious, and most solemn act of the supreme Legislator of the universe, no less authority than his own, could either abolish, or alter it; and when the period arrived, wherein he saw fit to set aside, and supersede this law of outward and carnal ordinances, by bringing forward into full view, and sole obligation, the substance pointed to by it, his 'spiritual and more excellent covenant; it was

necessary that it should appear to be done, by clear demonstrations of the same sovereign authority, in as public a manner, and at the most proper season for it. Accordingly, the gracious dispensation of the gospel was introduced by evidences of Divine authority equally extraordinary, and equally suited to its placid and salutary nature.

Besides the numerous predictions of prophets concerning the Messiah, the advent of his forerunner the Baptist, and the miraculous conception of our Saviour by the blessed virgin, witness the many wonderful works he performed, the unaccountable darkness, and the rending of the veil of the temple throughout from top to bottom, upon his giving up the ghost; denoting the separation, conclusion, and passing away of all sign and ceremony, and the disclosure of the substance in spirit and truth; his astonishing resurrection, and that of the bodies of buried saints which arose and went into the city; and his visible ascension, attended with the glorious ministration of angels. After all this, at the time of the Jewish feast of Pentecost, annually observed in memorial of the giving forth of the law on Mount Sinai, the apostles and disciples, male and female, being assembled together according to the Lord's command, the holy spirit gave a two-fold demonstration of its advent, as the administrative power of the Christian dispensation, then to commence without any mixture of a legal or shadowy nature; first, by the appearance of cloven tongues, as of

fire, which sate upon each of them. Second, by filling their hearts with the Holy Ghost,* to such a degree that they began to speak with other tongues, or in other languages besides their own, as the spirit gave them utterance. Endued with heavenly wisdom and power, and inflamed with Divine love and fervour, they were now qualified to put in practice the commission before given, in a verbal manner, by the great Lord and law-giver. To divers of them were likewise added, the miraculous powers of healing all manner of diseases; the dumb were made to speak, the deaf to hear, the lame to walk, the blind to see; demoniacs were dispossessed, and the dead were raised and restored to life.

2. But these extraordinary powers were neither conferred upon all, nor confined to the apostles only; yet a measure of the same spirit was communicated to every one of them, women as well as men; otherwise Peter's application of the prophecy of Joel had not been true. They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, but differently gifted and qualified by it, for different services, according to the will and wisdom of the great dispenser. "To one is given by the spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same spirit; to another faith by the same spirit; to another the gift of healing by the same spirit; to another the working of miracles by the same spirit; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to

* Acts ii.

another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues. But all these worketh that one and the self same spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."*

Hence it appears, that what are commonly called miracles, are not necessary or essential to Divine inspiration, but only adjunctive operations of the spirit thereto, which have been occasionally super-added; and therefore may either totally cease, when the occasions for which they were added are over, or continue to be used as it shall appear requisite to Divine wisdom. When therefore the gospel was so far spread and established in the parts then intended, that the end for which those extraordinary powers were afforded was answered, they were gradually withdrawn from the church; which was left, in the general, upon its proper and permanent bottom, the immediate inspiration of the holy spirit. No necessity therefore can be pleaded for the constant continuance of miraculous powers, or such a spirit of prophecy as signifies a peculiar gift of foretelling future events; but only of those supernatural influences, which are requisite to enlighten, quicken, regenerate, sanctify, bring forth the fruits of the spirit in man, enable him to fill up his duty, and finally prepare him for a celestial mansion. These are indispensably necessary to be continued. They are of moral consideration, and immediately influential to the preparation and salva-

* 1 Cor. xii. 8, &c.

tion of every man, which miracle and prediction are not.

3. Notwithstanding manifest appearances of extraordinary power were added, both to the introduction of the law, and that of the gospel, they are not to be considered as parts of either, but as sanctions requisite to their institution; so I believe, some Divine exertions of a miraculous nature have been evidenced, at times, under both administrations, as well as before them; either for the conviction of doubtful persons, or to give additional weight and authority to the ministry of some inspired servants of God, amongst those present with them, or to encourage and confirm them in their service. Though I doubt not but this hath sometimes been the case since the first century, and may remain to be so to the end of time, for neither the power nor goodness of the Almighty is shortened; yet I am also of opinion, that miraculous appearances have been less public, and more sparingly afforded since the first century than before it; which may be in part owing to the declension of the professing churches. I also believe, according to the prophetic declarations of the apostles, that under the declined and darkened state of both teachers and hearers, many strange signs, and lying wonders have been, and still may be suffered to be imposed upon the credulity of a disobedient people, by false pretenders, for the support of a corrupt interest, and the aggrandisement of the con-

ductors. Undoubtedly, those mysterious delusions have been abundantly more numerous for many centuries past, than the exertions of Divine power in an extraordinary way.

4. The continuation of exterior miracles is not essential to the ministration of the gospel; for was it so, Christianity could not subsist without them. Yet, though they are not of absolute necessity thereunto, they may be occasionally used, or not, as the sovereign wisdom sees meet. But that they are still constantly, or periodically continued in any particular church, as a peculiar mark of its being the only true church of Christ, above all others, I find no warrant to believe. Pretensions of this kind, naturally put thinking minds upon looking for a superior excellency in the doctrines and practices of such a church; and when they find it abound in superstition and pomp, coercive imposition, proud hierarchy, craft, lucre, and idolatry, even bordering upon polytheism; for what else is the adoration of saints and sinners under that title, by attributing a kind of omnipresence and influence in the court of heaven to them? When they find these, and other monstrous absurdities in the established doctrines of such a church, instead of the simplicity, purity, humility, love, and life of the gospel; what can they conclude of those pretensions, but that they are the deceitful juggles of imposture, and the legends of folly? The very ends most of them are calculated to answer, sufficiently evidence their

falsehood, and show, whatever they are, that they are not Divine.

It doth not appear, that in the primitive age of Christianity, those who were sometimes attended with miraculous powers, were always so accompanied in their ministry; nor that all inspired ministers were ever enabled to work miracles in the sight of the people. Seeing therefore it is evident, that these extraordinary powers are not essential to an inspired ministry, they are not the necessary proofs of it; nor the want of them an argument that a minister is not inspired. But though these are not essential to Christianity, immediate inspiration is constitutionally so. The excellency of the gospel dispensation is, that it is not a mixture of sign and substance, as that of the Jews was, nor a temporary, but a standing ministration of the spirit.

5. Seeing no further change of dispensations is ever to be made, nor any other doctrine to be preached, but that of our Saviour and his apostles; which, upon its commencement, received a miraculous confirmation sufficient for its lasting establishment, people are not now to expect, or call for miracles from those who preach the Christian doctrine; but to turn to, and attend upon that Divine principle pointed out in the Scriptures, as manifested in the breast of each individual, the ministration of Christ in spirit. This will give the sincere and humble receiver more clear and particular demonstration, than outward signs and

tokens could do ; for the powers whence they proceed may be disputed, but the internal evidence of the light of Christ, the life of men, as rightly waited for, and adhered to, leaves no doubt in the mind concerning its Divine nature and authority. Hence R. Barclay asserts, in the words of the primitive protestants, there is no need now of outward miracles to avouch the doctrines of the gospel ; yet acknowledges, that some did appear upon its revival in the last century. But to return.

The apostle, 2 Cor. iii. shows that the ministration of the gospel far excels that of the law, and that its excellency stands in its spirituality. Having spoken of the law, verse 7, he subjoins, “ How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious ? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious, had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory which excelleth. For if that which was done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious.”* Why is the gospel thus super-eminent above the law, seeing that was a Divine institution ? Principally, because it is not an outward code as the law was, but an inward law of life,† “ written, not with ink, but with the spirit of the living God ; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart ; and because it makes

* 2 Cor. iii. 8, 9, 10, 11.

† 2 Cor. iii. 3.

able ministers, not of the letter, but of the spirit; for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.”*

No man can be a true Christian without the spirit of Christ; for, “If any man hath not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”†

Every Christian ought to experience the indwelling of the spirit. “Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own.”‡

It is requisite to every Christian, that he should know the spirit to be his guide and leader; for, only “as many as are led by the spirit of God, are the sons of God.”§

No man can be a sheep of Christ without a distinguishing sense of the spirit of Christ. “I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.” — “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.” — “The sheep follow him, for they know his voice, and a stranger they will not follow.”|| The voice of Christ is the manifestation of his spirit to the soul.

Without being born again of the spirit, no man can enter the kingdom of God,¶ and without the spirit, no man can be born of it; consequently the spirit is altogether as requisite to us as it could be to the primitives. It is no more in our ability to regenerate and prepare ourselves for the kingdom, than it was in theirs. No powers, natural or ac-

* 2 Cor. iii. 6.

† Rom. viii. 9.

‡ 1 Cor. vi. 19.

§ Rom. viii. 14.

|| John x. 14, 27, 45.

¶ John iii.

quired, in our unregenerate state, are sufficient for so great a purpose; and to enable us truly to say, with the people of God in former times, "Lord, thou wilt ordain peace for us; for thou hast wrought all our works in us."*

Without the spirit, no man can be a minister of the spirit. The apostolic direction is, "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth; that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ."†

6. Every true believer and faithful follower of Christ, in the apostolic age, received a portion of the same holy spirit which the prophets and apostles did, though in less degrees; "for," saith Paul, "by one spirit are we all baptised into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one spirit."‡ This one spirit rendered them one body, and joined them to the one living head. "There is one body and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."§ Thus according to the several measures allotted them,

* Isaiah xxvi. 12.

† 1 Pet. iv. 10, 11.

‡ 1 Cor. xii. 13.

§ Eph. iv. 4, 5, 6.

they were all partakers of the same holy spirit ; and as it was then, so it is now, and ever must be in the true spiritual universal church of Christ.

7. The gospel sun arose in great splendour ; yet it appeared not in its full meridian at once, to any. The openings of truth in the minds of the primitive Christians, apostles as well as others, were gradual. As they advanced forward in the new nature, they saw further and further. For a time, they occasionally circumcised, entered into vows, anointed with oil, baptised with John's baptism ; all of which were of an external and legal nature. Nay, at first, they perceived not the Holy Ghost was to be given to Gentiles as well as Jews ; though Joel had plainly prophesied it should be poured out upon all flesh. But afterwards, as their concern continued to press forward, they were led beyond the first initiatory mixture of things ; they saw clearly and declared, that the holy spirit fell upon the Gentiles as well as Jews ;* that neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth ;† that a good conscience ariseth not from the practice of exterior rites ;‡ that the unction from the holy One is altogether sufficient to give instruction and true judgment ;§ that the saving baptism is not that which can reach no deeper than the outside of the flesh, but that of the spirit ; which baptises the heart, and produceth the answer of a good conscience towards God, by the

* Acts ix. 18.

† Heb. ix. 9.

† Gal. v. 6.

‡ 1 John ii 20, 27.

resurrection of Christ, or his spiritual arising in or upon the soul.*

8. It is no uncommon thing to hear the apostolic age styled the infancy of Christianity; and so it was in point of time, and also in respect to the temporary continuation of a few exteriors; not immediately seen through, and afterwards retained for a season, in condescension to those new believers, who had been so much attached to symbolical practices, they could not readily be brought to disuse them. And, in our day, many of the present leaders and rulers, in divers of the most numerous churches professing the Christian name, seem to imagine, that though the assistance of the Holy Ghost was necessary to the introduction and support of the Christian religion in primitive times, it has no need of it now. It is become so matured by man's wisdom and learning, which had no share in its origin, that it is fully capable to go alone. So that now it is, in great measure, become another thing, and stands upon another foundation, than formerly. Though it still calls Christ its head, and accounts itself his body, it receives no immediate direction from him, nor feels the circulation of his blood, which is the life and virtue of true religion. Thus deservedly incurring the reproof of the apostle implied in this query; "Having begun in the spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?"† In truth, it too evidently appears, in a general view, that the

* 1 Pet. iii. 21.

† Gal. iii. 3.

professed Christian churches, instead of being in the maturity of Christianity, are greatly in the decline from that state; or they could not be so insensible, nor durst appear so opposite to the life of religion, as to reject and decry the vital part of it, and treat it as extinct, unnecessary, or at least insensibly to be now received; as too many of their leaders and members do. Surely a church in this condition, is properly entitled to that address of the spirit, to the degenerate church of Sardis; "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest and art dead."* Yet, notwithstanding this seems to be too generally the case, and that the religion of many high professors is little else but real deism, covered with a superficial kind of Christianity, I hope, and verily believe, there are many living and sensible members of the body of Christ in those churches.

The vitality and glory of Christianity lies in the clear administration of the holy spirit, without any veil of legal or ritual adumbrations. School-learning is but a human accomplishment; and though very useful as a servant, is no part of Christianity. Neither the acquirements of the college, nor the formalities of human authority, can furnish that humility which fitteth for God's teaching. Possessed of arts and languages, weak people are puffed up with a conceit of superiority, which leads from self-denial and the daily cross, into pride and self-sufficiency; and instead of waiting for, and depending

* Rev. iii. 1.

upon the wisdom and power of God, into a confidence in the wisdom of this world, and a devotional satisfaction in the rote of external forms and ordinances. Whereas those that worship God in the spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh.* And why? Because it is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing.†

Whosoever deny that the holy spirit, and its internal operations, are now to be sensibly experienced, only demonstrate their own insensibility thereof. The true people of God in all ages, have declared their own undoubted sense of Divine illumination and help; and the apostle in Rom. vii. and viii. before cited, testifies he had a strong, clear, distinguishing sense of the holy spirit throughout its operations. As it was then, it now is, and must remain to be, so long as men are upon earth. The same work in due measure is absolutely necessary to every one, and the like sense of it proportionally clear and certain to all who experience regeneration. No man can obtain felicity out of God's kingdom, nor can any enter the kingdom without being born of the spirit; neither is the work of the new-birth wrought insensibly in any. Whatever unknown means men imagine, insensible operation is not regeneration. It is a mere deception. The Holy Ghost, whether it operate by words and instruments, or without them, always comes in power; a power which gives an undeniable sense of it; perfectly distinct from, and above all other powers; and with a

* Phil. iii. 3.

† John vi. 63.

perspicuity, at times as far exceeding all natural lights, as the radiant sun does the faint glimmer of the glow-worm.

This holy spirit of Divine light and power of life, is the great fundamental principle of the reproached Quakers, and the only true saving principle for all mankind. It is Christ in spirit, a light to lighten the Gentiles, and God's salvation to the ends of the earth; who always became, and stands always ready to become, the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him.*

* Luke ii. 32. Acts xiii. 47. Heb. v. 9.

CHAPTER X.

1. Man, without Divine grace, wholly unable to take one step towards his salvation. 2. God first sets man at liberty, often revisits him by the spirit of grace, seeks by all proper means to prevail with him, without violating the liberty he affords him, till his continued backsliding demonstrates he will not turn from his evil ways, and live. Then his time of visitation ceases, and he is given up to his beloved delusions. 3. God is not the author of evil. Objections from Isaiah and Amos answered. 4. Men justified in evil doing, if God be its author. What sin is. It is not the effect, but the cause of his displeasure, and to be placed to man's account. 5. The cause of man's salvation. The great efficient of it. He operates towards it, both immediately, and by the use of proper means; all by grace, through the faith it communicates; which necessarily produceth good works, not to be attributed to man as meritorious. 6. What Calvinism teaches. 7, &c. The modern Fatalists somewhat refine upon this, but unavoidably centre in the same absurdity and falsehood. This largely shown in variety of matter to the end of this chapter.

1. HAVING endeavoured plainly to show what the leading principles of the people called Quakers are, and that they are the genuine doctrines of true Christianity, I shall now proceed to take notice of divers matters more particularly.

Robert Barclay says, "As man is wholly unable of himself to work with the grace, neither can he move one step out of the natural condition, until the grace of God lay hold upon him, so, it is possible to him to be passive, and not resist it, as it is possible for him to resist it." That is, by the power of Divine grace laying hold of or influencing the spirit of man, it first becomes possible for him to be passive, and not resist its operation; which is the

first step man takes in the way of salvation. "Without me," saith our Saviour, "ye can do nothing."* "Man cannot set one single step towards his salvation, without the assistance of the grace of God, as the first moving, and continually enabling cause, both of the will and the deed." So that, though passiveness is the beginning of the work, he is previously disposed to it by virtue of the holy spirit. We attribute the whole of man's salvation to it, first and last, without at all placing man's destruction to the account of his Maker.

Our doctrine teacheth, 1. That man has no ability to save himself, is not naturally in a state of equal freedom to good or evil at his pleasure, nor is in possession of that faith which is necessary to his salvation. 2. That the Redeemer affords a manifestation of his spirit to the soul of every man, by which, at seasons, he checks his corrupt inclinations, stops them in their career, and puts it in his power to reflect upon his present condition, and become passive to the operation of this inward principle. If he resist it not, but stand in submission, it takes further hold of him, gives him so to believe in it, as to suffer it in some degree to unite with, abide in, and operate upon him. In this situation, he feels strength and comfort spring up from it, which increaseth his faith and trust therein, and gradually enables and engages him to become active; that is, to join heartily in concurrence with its operations,

* John xv. 5.

and to proceed from faith to faith, and from one degree of grace to another, till he attain to know the new-birth of the spirit, and to participate in degree of the glorious light, life, and nature of the heavenly kingdom.

2. God hath made man a reasonable creature, and therefore requires a willing obedience of him, in order to the high reward of eternal felicity; and if he repeatedly visits all with the reaches of his grace, and continues time after time to convict, persuade, and woo, as the Scriptures declare, that he may prevail upon him to come to repentance; doth he not go as far as reasonable creatures can claim, without violating the rational liberty he affords? Let man but yield obedience to his convictions, and see if he can charge his Creator with partiality or hard measure. It is the unprofitable and unprofiting servant that doth this.

Education and tradition do certainly prepossess, and give a bias to the mind against every doctrine different to those it hath been taught; but the Divine light, at times, darts in upon the soul unawares, as quick as lightning; penetrates through all its darkness and every false colour; disturbs it in its polluted rests and carnal gratifications; shows its bondage under them, and inspires the secret wish, and heaving sigh to be delivered, attended with some degree of resolution against them. This being the opening of Divine light upon the mind, is called the day of God's visitation, the time of grace

unto man; wherein life and death are distinguished in him; and liberty is not only given him to choose life, which he could not do before, but also a suitable measure of ability to love and cleave to the grace he is visited with, and thereby to come to repentance, and be saved. For this grace is the spirit of the Saviour, and brings the power of salvation in it.*

These merciful visitations of Divine grace are often repeated, by night as well as by day. "God," saith inspired Elihu, "speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not; in a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon man, in slumberings upon the bed. Then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction; that he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man."† He then proceeds to show, how he operates upon the submissive soul, in the work of repentance and mortification, and what shall be its issue. Afterwards, he recapitulates the whole in these comprehensive terms. "He looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profiteth me not; he will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light. Lo, all these things worketh God oftentimes with man, to bring back his soul from the pit to be enlightened with the light of the living."‡

The great FATHER OF MERCIES is pleased to con-

* Tit. ii. 11.

† Job. xxxiii. 14, &c.

‡ Ibid 27, &c.

tinue his gracious visitations from on high to back-sliding men, till they are become so determined in wickedness, and so habitually united to its servitude, that like the servants in Exodus, xxi. 5, 6, they will not be freed from it. Then night comes upon them, the day of their visitation ceases; for God will not always strive with those who have been long and often reproved, and still harden their necks,* to no purpose; but after long forbearance, he withdraws the reaches of his merciful loving-kindness, and suffers them to incur that dreadful sentence, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still."†

When persons are thus judicially hardened, and given up to their own hearts' lusts and beloved delusions, and left in a state of insensibility of the Divine principle, they may blindly mistake it for peace and security. To such, conscience becomes for the present, obscured and as a book shut up, wherein they cannot read; but in the day of the righteous retribution of the great judge of quick and dead, this hidden volume will again be unfolded, by him who openeth and none can shut, and a just distribution made to every one according to what is written therein; for it will prove either a book of life or of death to every man; to them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, have sought the glory of God, their own salvation, and the good of others, immortality and eternal life; but to those who have continued in disobedience and rebellion

* Prov. xxix. 1.

† Rev. xxii. 11.

against God, tribulation and anguish both inexpressible and interminable.

3. Can any reasonable creature think it possible, that the same Spirit and Power of goodness which condescended to take our low nature upon him, suffer in, and sacrifice that nature whilst connected with it, a propitiation for the sins of the whole world,* could ever intentionally consign the majority, or any part of the same world, to unavoidable, unconditional misery? It appears from his attributes of truth, equity, wisdom, mercy, and goodness, impossible that he should either actually oblige any of his creatures to sin, that they might be miserable; or, when he has created them, to desert them to sin and misery, by entirely withholding from them that which is necessary to their help and preservation. We therefore rationally conclude, that he doth not only set good and evil before man in their just distinctions, but at the same time enables him to choose which he will follow; and further, that he stirs up and assists man to desire after true felicity; and as he abides in this desire, he empowers him to strive, press, and wrestle effectually for deliverance and preservation.

The primary motions of volition in the mind being very nice and delicate, are not easy, if possible, for men to form a precise idea of, without the light of God's spirit; whence some have taken occasion to charge the different dispositions of men

* 1 John ii. 2.

towards the visitations of Divine grace, to God's account; by which they render him the primary author of evil, who, by the special peculiarity of his essence, is too unchangeably perfect in all his attributes, ever to warp from perfect rectitude. But is it not absurd to suppose, that any intelligent being can voluntarily produce what is contrary to its nature; especially an omnipotent existence, whose power must be irresistible by all objects and occurrences? Is not sin the transgression of God's will, and vice contrary to his nature? How then could these be produced by an act of his will, or be the genuine fruit of his power, either mediately or immediately? Can a right understanding lead any man to think, that the will of God is possible at any time to be contrary to his nature?

From purity, goodness, and virtue, no impurity, vice, or evil could naturally arise. But that text hath been objected, "It is impossible but that offences will come."* True; but whence come they? Not from God, but from that root of corruption which hath entered and overspread the world. Whilst this corrupt root remains, they will naturally spring from it; and the same text pronounces, "Woe unto him through whom they come." "But God saith, I create evil."† And the prophet saith, "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?"‡ Moral evil is not here intended, but the natural evil of pain and distress, through hos-

* Luke xvii. 1.

† Isa. xlv. 7.

‡ Amos iii. 6.

tility, sickness, famine, &c., which are the judgments of God upon men for disobedience and the commission of moral evil.

4. To say, that God originally so constituted and ordered things, that evil must necessarily ensue in consequence of such constitution, is to treat him both as the designing and potential author of all evil. Wherein then are the wickedest creatures, whether angelical or human, to blame? If they cannot be otherwise than they are, nor act otherwise than they do; in point of equity, all their wickedness is justified by the necessity they are originally subjected to by their Creator; whom this doctrine renders the real author of it, either immediately or remotely. If God himself laid the groundwork of all evil, he must be the author of all that follows by necessary consequence upon it.

According to my apprehension, sin consists in the creature's preferring the indulgence of its depraved nature, to the obedience of Divine grace; which indulgence leads it to the abuse of that grace; and to think, speak and act against the manifested will of its Creator. Neither the origin, nor continuance of sin in the world can be the fruit of God's will; for it always brings his displeasure upon the creature. It is not the effect, but the cause of his displeasure. A Being, perfectly holy, just and good, can neither do evil, nor delight in seeing his creatures do it. It is contrary to his nature, therefore against his will, and what he could not suffer to

originate without offering means to prevent it, and showing his displeasure with it; nor can he consistently be conceived to extend personal approbation, or aversion to any, exclusive of the state of the parties respecting good and evil.

That some obey, and others refuse obedience to the manifestations of Divine grace, is certainly true; and we believe, the cause of this difference is not of God, but entirely owing to man. Let him that doubts it inquire in his own conscience. The faithful witness there, by its condemnations for evil, will plainly show him, that the fault is his own. What man is there upon earth without these compunctive strokes? Who has not, also, felt at times inclinations and dispositions excited in him towards virtue and a good life; and who knows not, that when he followed them, he found peace in his obedience; and when he turned from this salutary pursuit to one of a contrary nature, he incurred trouble and condemnation? Can a reasonable creature need further proofs, that both those convicting reprehensions and comforts, are the internal immediate adjudications of a just, good, powerful, omnipresent, all-intelligent principle? And what is this but God; and for what end doth he thus attend every soul and conscience, but that all may come to repentance and experience salvation?

5. The first moving, true and proper cause of man's salvation, is the goodness and love of God to him. The essential means by which he effects it,

is the operation of his own holy spirit on the soul of man; often immediately, and sometimes instrumentally, by making use of exterior and incidental things, and working by them as secondary means; such as preaching, reading the Scriptures and other good books, pious conversation, worship, mercies, distresses, &c. After this manner it pleaseth Divine wisdom to exercise the body in the service of the soul, whereby both are bettered divers ways. It is God by his holy spirit who worketh all good in man, both as to the will and the deed. It is by grace we are saved, through faith, or in the way of faith, that faith which worketh by the love of God to the purifying of the heart, and the production of good works. These are the genuine fruits of it, and inseparable from it: therefore without works we cannot be saved. Yet it is not by the works that we are saved, as the cause of salvation to us, but by grace through the root of them, the faith, by which we believe in God, open to, and receive him, cleave to him, trust in him, and so lay hold of eternal life. This faith is not our faculty, but the gift of God to us. It comes by grace, the free grace of God, who is, "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."* He whose works are evil, hath not this saving faith, believe what propositions he will; for where it is, it necessarily produceth good works. This root is never without its fruits. "Show me thy faith with-

* 2 Pet. iii. 9.

out thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works,"* saith the apostle James. Yet these works do not render us meritorious of salvation, for they are not to be attributed to us, but wholly to him, who, through his grace, hath brought us into this blessed state of living faith wherein they are produced. "For by grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast; for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them."†

6. The reprobationary scheme demonstrates, to what a pitch of absurdity the minds even of sensible and pious men may be carried, when they follow their own cloudy reasonings instead of the illuminations of the holy spirit. Calvin asserts that, by the ordination and the will of God Adam fell. God would have man to fall—and that the highest or remote cause of hardening is the will of God. Beza saith, God hath predestinated not only unto damnation, but also unto the causes of it, whomsoever he saw meet. Zanchius, that God is the first cause of obduration. Zuinglius, that God moveth the robber to kill. He killeth, God forcing him thereunto. But thou wilt say, he is forced to sin; I permit truly that he is forced. Piscator, that reprobate persons are absolutely ordained to this two-fold end; to undergo everlasting punishment, and necessarily to sin;

* Jam. ii. 18.

† Eph. ii. 8, 9, 10.

and therefore to sin that they may be justly punished.* It is a mystery to me, how the poor reprobates can be justly punished, for actions they are Divinely obliged to commit; or how they can sin by necessarily doing the will of God.

7. Our modern writers of this class, refined a little from the barbarism of their predecessors in expression, but their refinements ultimately centre in the like accusation of their Creator. Jonathan Edwards, M. A. in his careful and strict inquiry into the modern prevailing notions of that freedom of will, &c. has these expressions: "If by the author of sin be meant the sinner, the agent, or actor of sin, or the doer of a wicked thing; so it would be a reproach and blasphemy to suppose God to be the author of sin. — But if by the author of sin is meant the permitter or not hinderer of sin; and at the same time a disposer of the state of events in such a manner, for wise, holy, and most excellent ends and purposes, that sin, if it be permitted, or not hindered, will most certainly and infallibly follow; I say, if this be all that is meant by the author of sin, I do not deny that God is the author of sin"—"It is no reproach for the Most High to be thus the author of sin. This is not to be the actor of sin, but on the contrary, of holiness. What God doth herein is holy, and a glorious exercise of the infinite excellency of his nature"—"That it is most certainly so,

* Cap. 3. Gen. 1 Inst. C. 18 S.1. Lib. de Præd. Lib. de Prov. Lib. de Præd. De Eccaut. Q. 5. Lib. de Pro. vid. C. 5. Resp. ad Verst. Part. i. p. 120.

that God is in such manner the disposer and orderer of sin, is evident, if any credit is to be given to Scripture; as well as it is impossible in the nature of things to be otherwise.”*

I think I have already shown, in the preceding part of this discourse, that it is not only possible, but most probable to be otherwise; and now shall proceed to show, it is impossible to be according to this author's assertion.

8. If God disposeth the state of events in such a manner, that sin will most certainly follow, and that he also permits, or doth not hinder it, he must be the sole author of sin himself; and those who are called the actors, or committers of evil, are only subjects by whom he effects it. They are nothing more, in the case, than the necessitated instruments of evil. If he hath so ordered the nature and concerns of his rational creation, that they must most certainly and infallibly sin, he must be the cause of sin, and not they; and it cannot be righteous in him to charge the blame of what must infallibly follow, from his own determination and disposal, upon those to whom he has rendered it unavoidable.

If the Almighty, from the beginning, so ordered his creation, that evil must necessarily ensue in it, it must be designed by him, or he would not have so ordered it; and every supposed transgressor necessarily acts according to the Divine will, in every

* P. 357-8.

sin he commits; and the Divine being takes pleasure, first in his sin, and next in his eternal misery; for he is certainly pleased when his will is done. What worse can be said of the worst of beings, than this doctrine implies of the best.

If man be allowed no choice, he can incur no guilt. He must at some time be at liberty, or he can never do amiss. If he do only what he is obliged to do, by a constitution of things fixed by his Creator, he cannot sin against him; for what he obliges him to do, he wills him to do, and it can be no transgression against him to do his will; because to sin, is to offend him, and to offend him is to act contrary to his will. Whatever a man doth from the necessity of his nature, let that necessity be the consequence of the lapse of his first parents, or not, if a remedy be not in his power, it is the same thing to him. It was not himself that subjected himself to such a faulty or defective nature; therefore he cannot, in equity, be condemned for what he could no way help or avoid. To assert, that a person may be justly punished for being what he is obliged to be, or doing what he is inevitably forced to do, by his Maker, may pass upon blind inconsiderate people for mystery; but to others it must appear a manifest absurdity, and a most daring one, when attributed to the eternal fountain of all truth and justice; a reproach to him, and blasphemy against him.

9. It is impossible God should commit any act of

sin, because it is against his nature, and consequently impossible he should will it. Sin is the transgression of his will, and if he could neither will nor act it, he cannot be any way the author of it. Barely suffering it to arise, is not causing it to be. All that can be allowed is, that by forming reasonable creatures, and constituting them in a state of rational freedom, he afforded them the opportunity of making their duty their choice; but never willed them to abuse it, by lapsing from the grace he favoured them with for their preservation, dividing their wills from his will, and counteracting his salutary laws, to whom they owed their being, and on whom they must absolutely depend for all the good they ever could enjoy. And notwithstanding he foresaw they might be prevailed on to make a wrong use of their liberty, he certainly intended to favour them with means amply sufficient for their recovery and restoration. Though he forbore forcibly to hinder them from falling into iniquity, he did all that could be done to prevent it in rational creatures. He forewarned them against it, showing them the dreadful consequence of it, and unquestionably armed them with power, by his spirit, to withstand all temptation to it, had they kept under it. He never could so permit, as to license their departure from their reasonable duty, and true interest. By the power and goodness dispensed to man, he might have stood without sin; and now that he has fallen into it, by a renewal of the same power and good-

ness still afforded him, he may be recovered from it, and brought to felicity. His Redeemer both offers and assists him; yet he backslides, and refuses to abide under the guidance of his great benefactor. Man's destruction, therefore, is of himself, and in the Lord alone is his help.*

10. We are told, *the will is always determined by the strongest motive*. Has the will no liberty then, at any time? Is it always so forcibly determined, in all its motions, by circumstances and motives successively arising upon it, from the original constitution of things, that every man is necessarily obliged to think, speak, and act just as he doth? No, it is answered, in temporal matters the mind has a liberty of choice. Why not in spirituals as well as temporals? How are the motives and circumstances which determine the will in temporal concerns, more in its power than those that determine it in spiritual ones; and how do we know it to be so? Was this really the case, our inevitable acts would certainly render us no proper subjects of reward and punishment; of come ye blessed, or go ye cursed. We must be equally unentitled to approbation and censure.

Those who alledge, that motives arise from the circumstances we are placed in, and the occurrences we meet with, which necessarily oblige us to think, speak, and act as they impress our minds, do not appear sufficiently to consider, that there is a su-

* Hos. xiii. 9.

preme all-powerful Controller of circumstances and events, who can, and unquestionably doth, in due season, by his potential influence upon the mind of man, counterbalance every other influence. Can we think that he placeth good and evil, life and death before men, as the sacred records testify, and calleth them repeatedly to choose life and good, and yet that he doth not enable them so to do? Every Divine precept, every exhortation, every command, every commination, implies a liberty afforded to the subject, to comply or refuse; to obey or disobey.

11. In the supposition before us, the will of man is effectually deprived of all freedom in his main concern. For it is the same thing to the sufferer, whether the superior power subject him under this irresistible fatality, by an immediate and unalterable decree, or by the means of motives and inducements, so powerfully suited to his natural inclinations and passions, that he must necessarily be carried away with them. The man is equally in bondage either way. To tell him that his will is free, because he doth as he pleases when he acts agreeably to those motives, and the dispositions they necessarily excite, or enlarge, whilst at the same time, they are unavoidable by him, and so irresistibly influential to his corrupt inclinations, that they are rendered eagerly concurrent with them; to argue in this case, that because the party pursues the gratification of his present desires, he acts upon a principle of freedom, is to assert an

evident falsehood. For, the man is first deceived, overpowered, and so unwittingly captivated, that he cannot avoid willing the evil he is ensnared into; and though he wills it, it is because his will is not at liberty, but previously deceived and captivated, though he sees not how; and instead of being a moral agent, is merely the instrument of an unseen superior power, who artfully obliges him to an evil course, and to the infelicity consequent upon it.

The nature of liberty supposes no absolute necessity, but such a freedom as may admit of choice, without a predetermining power obliging one way only. It is true, the powers of men, as well as those of all other creatures, are necessarily limited to their proper sphere. No creature can exceed the bounds of its proper element, yet it can act with freedom therein, as a bird in the air, or a fish in the water; so man, though unable to stretch beyond the compass of humanity, is enabled to act at liberty within it; and I conceive, a wise and good being, though omnipotent, would not put any restraint or force upon him there, but for his good. It is barbarous to suppose, he would restrain him from good in order to his hurt. "Far be it from God that he should do wickedness; and from the Almighty that he should commit iniquity. For the work of a man shall he render unto him, and cause every man to find according to his ways. For he will not lay upon man more than right; that he should enter into judgment with God."*

* Job. xxxiv. 10, 11, 23.

12. I cannot perceive any ground for a destructive partiality in Almighty wisdom, and perfect equity. Can he who prefers mercy to sacrifice, exalt cruelty above mercy? To suppose, that the Supreme excellence should create all the millions of mankind of one nature, and for eternal duration, and that he should either immediately or remotely, necessitate a minority of them to everlasting happiness, and at the same time determine to give the major part no other opportunity but to be inevitably and eternally miserable; is to suppose, that there is more cruelty than goodness, more rigour than wisdom, and more inequality than mercy in the Divine nature. I therefore must conclude, that the supposition is irrational, unjust, and grossly injurious to the Divine character.

Is it to be understood, that he who is supposed to act in this contrary manner, towards his creatures in the same state and nature, doth it from one and the same nature in himself; or that he is differently determined towards them, from two different natures of contrary dispositions in himself? I am utterly unable to conceive, how opposite wills can subsist in the same nature, and how two contrary natures can exist in a being of perfect and immutable simplicity and purity; or that such contrary procedures concerning his rational creatures, can arise from unity, equity and goodness, in the utmost perfection? But no difficulty attends the supposition, that the same nature should operate to differ-

ent effects, upon subjects in different conditions. It is evident to every man's observation, that the most glorious inanimate object of creation, the sun, by its beams will soften pitch and harden clay; but these contrary effects arise not from different natures in its own rays, but are different effects of the same beams, occasioned by the contrary dispositions of the pitch and clay to receive them. So, I apprehend, the holy spirit operates differently on different persons, by reason of their different states and dispositions to receive its influences.

It is not a little affecting, to behold allegations so injurious to the great dispenser of all good, set forth with subtlety of sentiment, and elegance of language, which can hardly fail to operate to the deception and hurt of those who embrace and allow them a place in their minds. To assert, that God either originally, or afterwards, disposed the course of things, and state of events in such a manner, that sin must certainly and infallibly follow, is to render him the intentional and primary author of all the evil that ensues. For he that raises a building, causeth it to be filled with combustibles, and sets fire to it by a fuse, or a train of powder of the greatest extent, which must infallibly burn it down. is as certainly the destroyer of the edifice, as if he fired it immediately without such means.

13. It hath been alleged, If God had not given man liberty, he could not have abused it. Very true. If the artificer had not made, nor the shopkeeper fur-

nished the suicide with the knife he cut his throat with, he could not have misused it; but is he who made or sold it him, for better purposes, entitled to any part of his guilt? Without liberty man could not have sinned, and without the knife the suicide could not have made such a self-injurious use of it; yet it is not the knife, nor those who furnished it; neither is it the liberty, nor he who afforded it; but the ill-conceived disposition of the perpetrator from whence the default ariseth, and to which it is, in justice, wholly to be imputed.

14. All the souls that God has made are equally his; and he whose mercies are over all his works, overlooks none of his creatures in the distribution of his mercies. He withholds his talents from none; but dispenseth them in different portions to different persons; that social communication and connection may be preserved amongst us in this life. To one he gives five talents; to a second, two; to a third, one; but to every one a degree of Divine manifestation sufficient, if believed in and obeyed, to operate to his salvation. He justly requires a profiting answerable to the measure he affords; and as he perfectly knows to what degree of improvement each might have attained, he will finally judge all according to their increase, their negligence, or their rejection of the talent received.

15. The rational immortal soul, is principally and essentially the man. This, as I have already shown, is the immediate creation of God, and descended

not from Adam and Eve, nor passeth from parents to children, like the mortal body; and seeing it never was in them, it never sinned in them. The doctrine of *preterition*, therefore, which supposes that all sinned when Adam transgressed, and deserve condemnation for the sin he committed, and thence concludes, that God doth justly withhold his saving grace from the majority of mankind; is a conclusion drawn from untrue premises, and consequently a false doctrine. First to create the rational soul, and then to forsake it, is not preterition, but dereliction. And this doctrine is not only false, but dangerous. For when some feel the comfortable touches of Divine visitation, instead of humbling themselves under it, that the work of regeneration may go forward, this opinion leads them to imagine it to be a mark of their election, and perhaps to add other marks to themselves from mistaken Scriptures; by which they increase their natural pride, self-conceit, and presumption, which defeat the good intention of God's grace towards them. Others, of a melancholy turn, when convicted and distressed in their minds for sin, are led, by this opinion, to think it a mark of personal reprobation, and thence into despondence, with all its dismal consequences. Thus, what the merciful Creator intends for men's benefit, they turn to their own great disadvantage.

16. Whatever doctrine contradicts the evident sense of those clear and expressed portions of the

sacred record, which by Divine commission, professedly and directly treat upon this point ; such doctrine must be false, and ought to be rejected. It answers no good purpose to increase disputation about things hidden, or texts obscure and ambiguous ; but this is certain, and certainly to be relied upon, that where the Almighty plainly declares his will respecting his creatures, he, who, cannot be mistaken, is surely to be credited in preference to the contractions of mistaken men, who presume to interpret his words so as to contradict his most clear, and most solemn asseverations.

Through a misapprehension of the second commandment, the people of Israel, in Ezekiel's time, had espoused this reprobationary notion, that the children were punished for the sin of their parents ; so that it was become a maxim among them, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." The prophet, therefore, was especially commissioned to declare God's immutable will and determination in opposition thereto, "As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. Behold, all souls are mine : as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine ; the soul that sinneth it shall die.* The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son ; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall

* Ezek. xviii. ver. 2 to 5.

be upon him.*—Yet ye say, the way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel! Is not my way equal? Are not your ways unequal? When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth in it, for his iniquity that he hath done shall he die. Again, when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive. Because he considereth, and turneth away from his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die.†—I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord God. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin.‡ The prophet repeats more to the like purpose, both in this chapter, and in the 33d. “As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? §—Yet the children of thy people say, the way of the Lord is not equal; but as for them, their way is not equal. When the righteous turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, he shall even die thereby. But if the wicked turn from his wickedness, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall live thereby.” ||

It is manifest, the death denounced in these

* Ezek. xviii. 20.

† Ver. 25 to 29.

‡ Verse 30.

§ Chap. xxxiii. 11.

|| Verse 17, 18, 19.

Scriptures, is not the common death of the body; for in that respect, one event happeneth to the righteous and the wicked; but that state of everlasting infelicity peculiar to those who go out of time into eternity, without repentance and regeneration.

From all these express declarations, it evidently appears, that the Almighty "doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men;"* that he is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.† These are all plain manifestations of the mind of God professedly on the point; and to all who intend not to deny his uprightness and veracity they ought to be decisive. The sins of men are placed to the account of their own will and not to the will of God, in that pathetic expostulation, *Why will ye die?* And indeed, it is impossible he should will that which is a transgression of his will. It is clear, he doth all that can be done by fair means to prevent it. By that pressing repetition, *Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways*, it is manifest, he puts it in the power of men to turn from them. Who then can justify their perverseness, by any way charging their sin, either immediately or remotely, to his account?

Men are not destroyed through any malevolence in their Creator towards them; but are saved by his grace, which he dispenseth to all from that unparalleled benevolence, which ariseth purely from his infinite goodness. Sinful man hath nothing to offer;

* Lam. iii. 33.

† 2 Pet. iii. 9.

God therefore, will have mercy, because he will have mercy; because he is full of mercy, he will dispense it to his helpless and unworthy creatures. "I," saith he to the repenting sinner, "even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions, for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins."*

17. Detachments of various texts and portions of Scripture, though indirect to the subject, and alluding to different considerations, have been pressed, and marshalled under divers colours, to fix a cruel partiality on our common Creator and benefactor. We are told, that he ordered the obstinacy of Pharaoh, the sin and folly of Sihon, and the kings of Canaan, the treacherous rebellion of Zedekiah against the king of Babylon, the rapine and ravages of Nebuchadnezzar, &c.† But, properly considered, this was ordering punishment for sin, not sin for punishment. He hardeneth none till they have hardened themselves past all probability of repentance, and then he leaves them to the misrule of their own beloved lusts and vices; and what are treated as unrighteous ravages, though really such in the committers of them, are, respecting the Almighty, the righteous execution of his justice against those who have filled up their measure of iniquity, and abused his gracious goodness and long forbearance towards them, till he sees fit no longer to continue it to them. Thus he punisheth the settled wickedness of some, by the wickedness of their enemies, which he

* Isa. xliii. 25.

† Edwards, p. 358, &c.

permits to be turned upon them; and afterwards proceeds in like manner with their chastisers, when they also have filled up their measure.

I shall omit at present to proceed further with the Scriptures alleged against the universal extension of Divine goodness to the souls of men; and acknowledge my inability to conceive, what wise, holy, and most excellent ends and purposes could be answered, by the Almighty's disposing the state of events in such a manner, that sin will most certainly and infallibly follow, and eternal misery to innumerable multitudes of his creatures in consequence; and also what glory can accrue to a being infinite in wisdom, power and goodness, from his continually creating immortal and reasonable creatures, with no better intention towards them, but that most barbarous one of irredeemable infelicity.

I am also at a loss to discover what comfort can arise to a humane, virtuous and charitable mind, from such a cruel consideration. Those hearts must be very unfeeling for others, and their conceit in their own favour very strong, who, fancying to themselves a personal election, can pride and console themselves in their own imagined security, and the inequitable destruction of the major part of their species. Misled men, like the unprofitable servant, may imagine such unjust severity in the unchangeable perfection of equity; but those who have the love of God shed abroad in their hearts, by the Holy Ghost, find it to flow freely to-

wards all mankind without exception, and to engage them to wish the salvation of all. This is a stronger proof to them of the universality of God's good-will to men, than all the sophistical reasonings of those who remain insensible of it, to the contrary.

18. It is impossible for God, who is most essentially and immutably justice and goodness itself, to act otherwise by his creatures, than according to justice and goodness; and therefore, he certainly doth not withhold, but affords his creatures the means necessary to their felicity. I believe his mercies are over all, and to all, with a just and gracious intent towards them; and that the universal Redeemer purchased gifts for those who prove rebellious, as well as others, and that all are visited with a manifestation of his spirit, that they may profit by it; and though they do lapse from the visiting power, and often lose the disposing assistances afforded them, he still follows them, time after time, in long forbearance, and often revisits them of his freely abounding grace and mercy, that they may be prevailed upon to come to repentance and be saved.

19. We read, Isaiah lv. 8, 9, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord; for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." And chapter xl. 28, the prophet saith, "There is no searching of

his understanding." Yet our Christian fatalists appear to think themselves wise enough to discover the very precise mode and manner of God's prescience; and because they can see but one way how omniscience should foreknow, they seem to conclude there can be no other in the unlimited expanse of infinite ability. But, "Who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor?"* To whom hath he revealed those unsearchable and incomprehensible secrets of the Divine essence, which belong to himself only?

A due degree of modesty would teach us, there is something in the mode and manner of infinite comprehension, as much beyond the reach of our limited capacities, as the extent of omniscience itself; and attempts to unveil inscrutable mysteries, are more evident demonstrations of human presumption and folly, than of wisdom and piety. Are those men sure there is no way possible for God to know, but what is open to the perception of their imperfect modicum of reason? The arguments they ground upon this imaginary foundation, are sufficient to impeach their basis; for they carry an evident face of falsehood. They ultimately and unavoidably render the undeniable source of all good, and centre of all perfection, the real and intentional author of all imperfection, vice and wickedness, and all the misery consequent thereupon; which it is impossible for unchangeable truth and goodness to be. "Wilt thou," saith he, disannul my judgment? Wilt thou condemn me, that

* Rom. xi. 34.

thou mayest be righteous?"* "God forbid," saith the apostle, "yea, let God be true, but every man a liar."†

From the certainty of the premises the certainty of the conclusion ariseth. From uncertain premises no certain conclusion can be drawn. There is something in the Divine prescience which always hath been, and is ever likely to remain an impenetrable secret to human understanding. What no man knows, no man can properly argue from. We know the Divine being is but one essence, perfectly pure and simple. One eternal, immutable, central power, making and supporting all other beings, and operating variously according to the subjects, and the state of the subjects of its operation; but never contrarily towards subjects in the same condition. As all souls are equally his immediate creation, no just reason can be advanced why he, who is righteous in all his ways, and holy or merciful in all his works,‡ should deal so unequally with them, as to predetermine some to eternal happiness, and others to inevitable misery. Mere will and pleasure, implies an unaccountable severity, though under the guise of sovereignty. The condemnation of men, according to our Saviour, is neither the fruit of God's previous decree, nor his preterition; for, "this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, but men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."§

* Job. xl. 8. † Rom. iii. 4. ‡ Psal. cxlv. 17. § John iii. 19.

CHAPTER XI.

1. The sufficiency of the spirit of Christ, for the instruction of his rational creation asserted, but it is not limited to the Scriptures nor to any other instrumental means.
2. The Scriptures not clearly and fully understood without the illumination of the spirit that gave them forth.
3. Authors cited to this purpose.
4. Barclay's assertion defended.
5. No disagreement or clashing in the different degrees of Divine evidence.
6. The infallibility of the Scriptures as given forth by the spirit, and the fallibility of human understanding concerning them.
7. None but the Divine author able to ascertain his own sense in the Scriptures.
8. The Scriptures rightly understood, a rule; but not the sole, the primary, and universal rule. The holy spirit alone is such.
9. The Scriptures allowed to be the primary written rule, to which, in all disputes we therefore refer, as well as others; but the immediate illumination of God's spirit, is a more certain criterion to each individual in his own breast.

1. CHRIST is with his true followers, and will be to the end of the world. To say, he is always with them in the Scriptures, appears to me too great a strain of language for truth to accompany. If the spirit of Christ be so connected with the text, as always to attend it, I apprehend no sincere and sensible reader could mistake the sense of it, nor any such differ to an opposition of each other about it; yet what is more common? We have frequently experienced, and always allowed, that the spirit of truth often useth, and openeth truth by the Scriptures, as an instrumental means; and we also assert, that the same spirit often hath opened truths, given a sense of their conditions, and administered

help to sincere and attentive minds, without the instrumentality of the Scriptures. This is the universal gospel-privilege, foretold by Jeremiah through Divine inspiration. "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more," of necessity, "every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, know ye the Lord; for they shall all know me," each man for himself, "from the least of them to the greatest of them, saith the Lord."*

It is rationally to be understood, that this Divine internal teacher, is so absolutely bound to the instrumentality of Scripture, in his immediate legation to the soul of man, that he never opens or instructs without it? The text implies no such matter. The apostle John, Anno Dom. 90, treats of this immediate teacher under the title of an unction from the holy One. "Ye have an unction from the holy One, and ye know all things."† That is, I take it, ye have the spirit, which as you attend to it, gives you a right discerning of all things that concern you; for, "The anointing which ye have received from him, abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you; but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth," the spirit of truth, "and is no lie; and even, as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him or it." This shows the complete sufficiency

* Jer. xxxi. 33, 34.

† 1 John ii. 20, 27.

of this inward, immediate instructor, without any instrumentality of an exterior kind, The eternal spirit of truth cannot stand in need of any such assistance; consequently, is not to be understood as confined to any, but operates either by the Scriptures, or without them, at his pleasure.

God hath always afforded instruction to his people; but his teachings by the law to the Jews, were through instrumental means. The prophet declares, this new covenant of the gospel should not be according to the old covenant of the law; it should not consist of instrumental teaching, though that might be occasionally used; for God himself would put his law in their inward parts.* This implies his own immediate communication to the soul, of that law which is not according to the literal nature of the old covenant, but is really and truly, the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus; the illuminating quickening law, immediately and mentally given to man by the spirit of life itself; which therefore is, and ever must be, the constitutional establishment of the gospel dispensation.

Isaiah, in a prophetic address to the gospel church, saith, "all thy children shall be taught of the Lord."† In reference to this, and other like prophecies, our Saviour saith, "It is written in the prophets, and they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me."‡ And in

* Jer. xxxi. 31, 32

† Isa. liv. 13.

‡ John vi. 45.

the preceding verse he saith, "no man can come to me except the Father who hath sent me, draw him."* This drawing, hearing and learning of the Father, and coming to Christ, are all spiritually to be understood; as I have shown in the former part of this discourse. This doctrine is witnessed to, 1 Thes. iv. 8, 9. Beginning with those who had so little understanding of it, as to treat it with contempt, the apostle declares, "he therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God who hath also given unto us his holy spirit. But as touching brotherly-love, ye need not that I write unto you; for ye yourselves are taught of God, to love one another." The apostle was then writing to them mediately from God, by Divine inspiration; and he makes a manifest difference between this mediate manner of teaching, and what he intended by their being taught of God; the direct and obvious sense of which is, God's own immediate illumination and instruction.

By necessary consequence from these premises, and abundance more that might be added from the Scriptures, it appears to be both an experimental and a Scriptural truth that God teacheth immediately by his spirit, as well as instrumentally by external means; and that this is an indispensable doctrine of the gospel.

2. Man without Divine illumination, has not sufficient ability to ascertain the genuine sense of

* John vi. 44.

doubtful and disputed texts; which being very numerous, together with the diversity of senses wherein those texts are understood, by persons apparently of equal sincerity and of the best natural and acquired parts, under the same, as well as different denominations, are plain indications that the assistance of the Divine author himself is requisite to the right understanding of them. Man's reason is too much clouded and biassed by his passions and prepossessions, to be justly denominated right reason; and its diversity concerning spiritual matters, and its mutability in the same person is very evident. Right reason is truth, unchangeably the same, and incapable of error, and therefore exists only in the Divine nature; which men must, in measure, become partakers of, in order to the rectification of their fallen and fallible reason.

Respecting the Scriptures, we are so far from lessening them, or opposing the true sense of them, that we verily believe, and sincerely assert, that the holy spirit, in what degree of illumination soever it appears, never can contradict them; for difference in degree makes no contrariety. It is the private, or particular interpretation of man without Divine illumination, that we object to, as insufficient to assure the sense of disputed Scriptures. Besides man's natural inability, the various prejudices, the prevailing passions, the different interests, and the diverse leaders of the people, all contribute to give different and sometimes opposite senses of the sacred texts. Many

have the words of the spirit in Scripture, who have not the mind of the spirit in their hearts.

3. Neither nature nor education can give a man the sense of the Holy Ghost; nor, of consequence, interpret its expressions with certainty. It is therefore truly asserted, not only by the Quakers, but also by abundance of distinguished writers of various professions, ancient and modern, that the internal illumination of God's holy spirit is absolutely necessary to every man, in order to his right understanding of the Scriptures. Let me advance a few out of many more now before me.

“The holy Scriptures, opened by the holy spirit, show Christ unto us; the holy spirit is therefore the opener of the Scriptures.” Theophylact in Joan 10.

“What men set forth from human sense may be perceived by the wit of man; but what is set forth by the inspiration of the Divine spirit, requires an interpreter inspired with the like spirit.” Erasmus, Paraph. in 2 Pet. i. 20, 21. And Coll. in *Ixthnophagia prope Finem*, he says, “They expound the sacred writings from the pulpit, which no man can either rightly understand, or profitably teach without the inspiration of the holy spirit.

“The Scriptures are of no private interpretation; i. e. not of every private man's interpretation out of his own brain, because they were dictated by the Holy Ghost; and by the Holy Ghost, the meaning of the Holy Ghost in them, only can be ex-

pounded." Obad. Warker's Disc. concerning the spirit of Martin Luther, p. 97.

"The Scriptures are not to be understood, but by the same spirit by which they are written." Luther, Oper. Tom. 2. p. 309.

"The spirit of God, from whom the doctrine of the gospel proceeds, is the only true interpreter to open it to us." Calvin's Com. in 1 Cor. ii. 14.

"The apostle teacheth, 1 Cor. 2, that the Scripture cannot be apprehended and understood but by the holy spirit." Zanchius, De Sacra Scriptura, Tom. viii. p. 430.

"The things of the spirit of God, are understood and perceived by the powerful inspiration of the holy spirit alone." Beza, Annotat. in 1 Cor. ii. 14.

"As the Scriptures were written by the spirit of God, so must they be expounded by the same. For, without that spirit, we have neither ears to hear, nor eyes to see. It is that spirit that openeth, and no man shutteth, the same shutteth and no man openeth." Bish. Jewel's Defence of the Apology, p. 72.

"The outward reading of the word, without the inward working of his spirit, is nothing. The precise pharisees, the learned scribes, read the Scriptures over and over again; they not only read them in books, but wore them on their garments; they were not only taught, but were able to teach others. But because this heavenly teacher had not instructed them, their understanding was darkened; their

knowledge was but vanity." Archbp. Sandys's Sermons, printed 1616, p. 48.

"The holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost; it followeth, that all the Scripture ought to be expounded by God, because it is inspired of God — We do acknowledge, that all means are vain, unless the Lord give eyes to see; to whom therefore, the prophet made his prayer; Open mine eyes, that I may see the wonders of thy law."* Rainold's Conference with Hart, p. 81.

"The internal light whereby we come to see the sense of the Scripture, is the holy spirit." Weemse's Christian Synagogue, lib. i. p. 31.

"The anointing of the holy spirit teacheth the faithful to understand those truths, which they have received from the apostles." Amesius, Bellarm. enervatus. Lib. i. c. v. n. 32. p. 60.

"It is not possible that supernatural knowledge should be rightly received, without supernatural light." Fra. Rous Interiora regni Dei Cœlest Academ. chap. ii. p. 12.

"God is the author of all Divine truth, and of the discovery of it made to us. An inward enlightening and irradiating the mind by the holy spirit, is absolutely necessary for the apprehending of the Divine mysteries, which are contained in the doctrines of the gospel." John Edward's Free Disc. concerning truth and error, p. 481.

"In regeneration the understanding is illuminated

* Psal. cxix. 18.

by the holy spirit, that it may understand both the mysteries and will of God." The Helvetian Confession, and Expos. *Fidei Christianæ*. chap. ix.

"The gift of interpreting Scripture, is not of human prudence, but of the Holy Ghost." *Wirtembergica Confessio, de Sacra Scriptura, in Corp. Confess.*

"We acknowledge the inward illumination of the spirit of God, to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the word." Confession of faith by the Assembly of Divines at Westminster, since approved by the Kirk of Scotland, and the same with that of the Independents, and particular Baptists.

Barclay's assertion, that neither the Scriptures, nor the natural reason of man, are a more noble, or certain rule or touchstone, than the immediate revelation of God's holy spirit, relates only to such as are sensible of its immediate revelations, and to the evidence of these revelations in the parties themselves to whom they are immediate. To these he asserts, they are more noble, because Divine; and more certain, because immediate, than their own private interpretation of Scriptures, by reading and study, without the illumination of the holy spirit, can be. The spirit only can ascertain the sense it intends. Sometimes it communicates a literal, sometimes an allegorical sense, a direct, or an allusive sense, a theoretical, or an experimental sense. Men are liable to mistake one for another;

and without a sense of the spirit, must often miss of the mind of the spirit.

In the next proposition, Barclay demonstrates the truth of his assertion, by showing from 1 Cor. xii. 12, &c., that though the body or church of Christ is one, it is composed of many members, who have each their several services appointed, and directed by the holy spirit in that body; and each must therefore attend to the spirit for his own proper direction. He afterwards instances the special duties of particulars in the church. Barclay therefore gives frequent advices, to a waiting for, and due attention to, the holy spirit.

We are well apprized of, and have always asserted, that greater and less degrees of Divine illumination have been communicated to different persons; but we also believe, there cannot be any contrariety, clashing, or dissonance in any of its degrees; because it is from one and the same spirit; and in what degree soever it appears, it speaks one and the same thing in point of congruity, and carries its own Divine authority with it in every degree. Hence, to suppose a disagreement between one degree of it and another, whilst it can differ in nothing but degree, is untrue and absurd. As to our own, or any man's own pretended, or any pretended Divine revelations, we utterly and equally disclaim them, as being of any authority, or advantage whatsoever; for such mere pretensions are altogether as unequal to discover and assure the true

sense of dubious parts of Scripture, as the unenlightened reason of the natural man. It is a vain thing in any person to pretend he has the true sense of the holy Scriptures, whilst his performances demonstrate his mistakes concerning it.

6. When any press their own particular opinion of the sense of any part of Scripture, as the true sense of the Holy Ghost, yet deny all sense of the Holy Ghost in their hearts, who that observes a diversity of senses amongst these can give credit to their assertions? But they allege, the Scripture is infallible. I allow it; but how is its true sense to be infallibly conveyed to every reader? By human study and instruction? That has led into all the differences and disagreements about it. The plain truth of the matter is, nothing but the spirit of Divine wisdom, whence the Scripture came, can give the genuine sense of it. For, "The things of God knoweth no man, but the spirit of God."* What is the infallibility of Scripture to him, who has not the infallible sense of it? If all had this, who have the Scriptures, none could mistake them, nor differ with each other about them; yet it is too manifest, by the differences among Christians, they do mistake them. This is not to be imputed to any defect in the sacred writings, but to the common unfitness of men's understandings to discover the right sense of them. What then can open it to man's capacity but the holy spirit?

* 1 Cor. ii. 11.

The question is not, whether the Scriptures, as written by Divine inspiration, are infallibly right, for such must be so; but whether every one that reads them, is able infallibly to understand them? To pretend, if they are not clearly to be understood without the assistance of the spirit, they are given in vain, is to contradict the Scripture, which declares that, "the manifestation of the spirit is given to every man to profit withal."* It may as truly be asserted, that the Divine being, whilst he knows we are in darkness, gives us a chart to direct our way, and at the same time withholds the light, by which alone we can discover its true contents; which is merely to mock and tantalise us, and also to render our situation worse than that of the Jews; for all the written precepts of their law were plain and evident. Yet God gave them of his good spirit to instruct them;† all the written doctrines of the gospel are not so, and is not the holy spirit as requisite to us as it was to them?

7. Scripture doctrines are of divers classes. They exhibit just morals, and benevolent conduct between man and man, in a manner superior to the best ethic writers in all ages and nations. These are generally and justly allowed to be of natural, universal, and unalterable obligation, and are sufficiently plain and clear to the common sense of every man. But matters relating to faith and worship, having admitted of many circumstantial additions and alter-

* 1 Cor. xii. 7.

† Neh. ix. 7.

ations, according to the different dispensations of Divine wisdom, have not been so level to men's understandings, nor have they been so united in judgment concerning them, as in the case of moral duties.

Ever since the collected publication of the New Testament, differences in opinion about the true sense, especially in matters of faith, have subsisted and abounded; and what can determine these differences? The learned A. saith, such a text means so and so. The learned B. asserts, it is to be accepted in a different, perhaps a contrary sense. They apply to the context, and remain still as different in opinion, and as positive of being in the right. They recur from text to text, and from critic to commentator, till they have exhausted every one they can find or force to their purpose, and still remain equally, if not more at a distance than at the beginning. What is there left to determine the matter? Will churches or councils do it? They jangle from year to year, or from age to age, and leave the difference as wide as they found it. The true sense still remains only with the Divine author of the disputed texts, and he alone is able to communicate it. Would it not be a wild presumption in either A. or B. to boast that he will try his opponent's opinion by the true sense of the spirit, and at the same time deny, that either himself, or man, can have any real sense of the spirit? I have not here supposed a nonentity, but a case that has subsisted for a great many centuries; and which must

always continue, whilst men prefer their own prejudices, imaginations, and reasonings, to the internal leadings of the spirit of truth.

8. We hold the Scriptures to be a rule to all that have them, so far as they have a right understanding of them, and also that they are adequate to the purpose intended by them; but we cannot aver, they are the sole, the primary, and the universal director of mankind in matters of religious duty. 1. They are not the sole director; because the spirit of God in the heart and conscience of man is also an undeniable director. 2. They are not the primary director; because the illumination of the holy spirit that gave them forth, is requisite to open the true sense of those numerous parts of them, about which the apprehensions of men so much differ. The spirit also from which the Scriptures came, is original, and therefore primary to them; and as the spirit only can open its own true sense included in them, they are secondary to the spirit, as an instrument in its hand. 3. They are not the universal director; because it is not probable that one in ten, if one in twenty, of mankind, have ever had the opportunity of possessing them. Seeing therefore this is the case, they cannot properly be pronounced, the complete, adequate, universal rule of mankind.

Hence we esteem them the secondary rule or guide of Christians; which being divinely communicated for the use of all to whom they may come, and also being intrinsically superior in excellence to

all other writings, we prefer them above all others, and as thankfully accept, and as comfortably use them, as any people upon earth; verily believing, with the holy apostle, that they "were written for our learning, that, we, through patience, and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope."*

This is not to depreciate the Scriptures, but to hold them in their proper place, and due superiority to the works of men, and subordination to their Supreme Communicator, and only sure expounder. For the holy spirit is requisite to the use of them, as the agent to the instrument; and what is an instrument without a hand to guide and enforce it? And which is superior, the agent or the instrument? The holy spirit is the original wisdom whence the Scriptures came, and the sole power that can open, and give right effects to them? The spirit of truth is given to guide into all truth;† is the only thing that can do it, and consequently the supreme guide afforded to mankind. It is both unwarrantable and irrational, to assert any thing else is the sole or primary director, whilst the spirit of God is communicated for that purpose.

The same Scripture-truths appear as differently to each person, as their understandings differ one from another. Human intellects therefore must be rectified, to enable them to see those truths in the same sense. The rectifier is the spirit of truth, which alone can unite them in the true sense.

* Rom. xv. 4.

† John xvi. 13.

We stick not to style the Scriptures collectively, a divine, or Christian rule; but we object to call them, The rule of faith and practice; lest that should be understood to imply we are to look for nothing further to be our guide or leader. The Scriptures themselves abundantly testify, there is something superior to them which all ought to look for, and attend unto; that is, the holy spirit of the Supreme Legislator of men, and prime Author of the sacred writings; in and by whose light and power they are made instrumentally useful, and adequate to the purposes intended by them. Like a good sun-dial, they are true and perfect in their kind, that is, as writings; but, respecting the parts differently understood, they may justly bear the same motto with the dial: *Non sine lumine*.* For as the dial, without the cast of the sun-beams, has not its proper use, to tell the time of the day; neither doth the ambiguous text answer its true end, infallibly to communicate the mind of the holy spirit to different understandings, except the luminous beams of the Sun of righteousness discover it to the attentive mind.

9. Our opposers call the Scriptures the primary rule. We allow it is the primary written rule, and in all disputes betwixt them and us, we abide by its decision, according to our understanding of the sense of it, which they profess to do likewise by theirs. In all public differences therefore we refer intentionally to the same rule with them. But we have

* Not without light.

both plain Scripture and experience to support our belief, that respecting the particular duty of individuals, every one hath in his own breast, a nearer and more certain rule or guide of conscience than the Scriptures; the manifestation of the spirit given to every man to profit withal; which, duly observed, gives a right interpretation of Scripture, so far as is necessary for them, and also the truest sense of each particular person's duty to him. When a person feels the faithful witness of God in his conscience condemning him for what is wrong, and approving him for what is right, does he not find it to speak more clearly, particularly, and convictingly to his case and state, than he can read it in the Scriptures? Can he then conclude, that this truly-distinguishing and most striking witness, is less than that spirit of truth, or comforter, which convinceth the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment?*

When Christ, after his resurrection, opened the understandings of his disciples that they might understand the Scriptures,† was not the divine illumination in their understandings, a more clear, certain and superior evidence of the sense of them, than all their reading and study could have afforded them, without such illumination? Are mankind now become so much more wise and penetrating, than those who for years had the benefit of hearing him who is perfect in wisdom, that they have no need of his assistance to open their understanding? Or

* John xvi. 8.

† Luke xxiy. 45.

is their school and college learning so perfect, as to render God's illumination quite needless? Are the innumerable clashings and janglings of the book-learned about the sense of Scripture, a proof of the unity of their sentiments, and the verity of their sense of disputed texts? If so, discord may be a proof of harmony, and fighting of agreement.

It is certain, without divine illumination, every reader of texts of a dubious sense, accepts them in the sense his prepossessions make for him; which is the cause of the innumerable differences amongst professing Christians. R. Barclay therefore justly denies that Divine inward revelations are to be subjected to the test either of the outward testimony of the Scriptures, or of the natural reason of man, as to a more noble, or certain rule or touchstone.

CHAPTER XII.

1. The 2 Tim. iii. 15. &c. explained. 2. What true Gospel-faith comprehends.

1. THE apostle writing to his beloved brother in Christ, Timothy, who in his former epistle, he styles a man of God, addresses him in particular with this expression: "From a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. *All Scripture given by inspiration of God,

* I cite this as it ought to be translated.

is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."* To add wisdom to the man of God, the regenerate man, in order to his perfection in Divine knowledge, appears to me a very different thing from the making a sinful corrupt man holy, or turning a gross and miserable sinner into a saint; for this, according to Scripture, is the peculiar work of the holy spirit; as I have already made appear.

The Scriptures Timothy had been instructed in from his childhood, could hardly be any other than those of the Old Testament; and all they could here be meant to do for the man of God, must be to afford him instruction in the way of righteousness; to add to his own experience, the experiences of those before him in that line. For to suppose they were sufficient to regenerate and perfect the sinful corrupt man, is more than they are able now to do, even with the New Testament added to them.

The sinful corrupt man is certainly he that abides in sinful practices; and the apostle saith, "He that committeth sin is of the devil."†

I judge this a proper opportunity to caution against such corrupt and dangerous positions as some have publicly avowed.

1. That man, at the same time he is actually unrighteous in himself, is righteous in Christ. That

* 2 Tim. iii. 15, 16, 17.

† 1 John iii. 8.

is, he is not what he is in reality, but what he persuades himself to be, by a false imagination concerning the sacrifice of Christ; like that generation who are pure in their own eyes, yet are not washed from their filthiness.*

2. That the Supreme essence of immutable truth, looks upon man in a false light; esteeming him pure, whilst he knows him to be sinful and corrupt.

3. That Christ, the truth, is a false medium, showing the states of men contrary to what they are in reality.

4. That man is the servant of Christ whilst he is under the influence of Antichrist; that he is imputatively holy, whilst he is ruled by the author of pollution, the adversary of all holiness; and that he is acting in the will of God, whilst he is doing the works of the devil; notwithstanding we read, "To whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or obedience unto righteousness."†

It is a vain delusion for any to expect, that purity in the highest perfection should unite with them, whilst they remain in the very cause of separation from him. Sin made the separation at first, and the continuance of it continues the separation. If it be queried, Did not Christ die to reconcile sinners to God? I answer, yes; but not to reconcile God to sin, nor to save sin. He suffered not to pur-

* Prov. xxx. 12.

† Rom. vi. 16.

chase a license for sinners to continue such, but to open the way for them to come to repentance, through the gift of God procured by him; for, saith he, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."* He came, not to uphold, but to destroy the works of the devil; which include all manner of sin and corruption. "Know ye not," saith the man of God, "that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God."† The notion of imputative righteousness to such as remain in the commission of these evils, therefore, is a vain and pernicious error.

We must die to sin, or we cannot live to God; and in proportion as we die to sin, we live in Christ, and no further. We must put on Christ, by true faith and obedience, which are never separate; for that is a false faith, which abides in, or satisfies, any without obedience. "Faith without works is dead,"‡ saith the servant of Christ; and show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works."§

The law saith, do, or avoid, this, and live. The gospel not only forbids the outward act, but also restrains the inward desire and motion towards it. The law saith, Thou shalt not kill; nor commit

* Luke xiii. 5.

† James ii. 20.

‡ 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10.

§ James ii. 18.

adultery; nor forswear thyself, &c. The gospel commands, give not place to anger; thou shalt not lust; swear not at all, &c. In this manner, the gospel destroys not the moral law, but fulfils it; by taking away the ground of sinful acts, and laying the axe of the spirit to the root of corruption.

Can the considerate imagine, that the everlasting source of wisdom and might, can be at a loss how to expel satan's kingdom in man whilst upon earth? Or can they think him so delighted with men's offences against his purity and goodness, as to will that satan should reign over his creatures to the last moment of their lives? Is it not more to his glory to deliver from the power of evil, and to save both from sin here, and misery hereafter, than to save only from wretchedness in futurity? Is a part greater than the whole? Or, is an incomplete deliverance preferable, or more glorious, than that which is perfect?

When doctrines opposite to purification of heart, and holiness of life, are industriously propagated, it stands every one in hand to be alarmed, lest, by giving place to them in their minds, they become blinded through the deceitfulness of sin; which will centre them at last in a fool's paradise, instead of the city of God, the heavenly Jerusalem, into which nothing that defileth, that worketh abomination, or maketh a lie, shall in anywise enter.*

2. The ability in the Scriptures, as before cited,

* Rev. xxi. 27.

to enlarge the man of God in saving wisdom, the apostle saith, is through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

What true gospel faith is, let us a little consider. As the entrance of the Divine word quickeneth the soul, so it first communicates a degree of faith, through which it operates; for true faith is the gift of God,* and the holy spirit is the spirit of faith;† which is not a bare belief of truths concerning Christ, but a faith in him.‡ The faith in Christ is not comprised in giving credit to narrations and doctrines, and a mode of practice framed by the wisdom of men upon it; for that centres short of the essential substance of faith. Gospel faith in man believes the truth of all that is revealed by the spirit, both in the heart, and in the sacred writings: because it feels it, savours it, and is one with it. It not only assents to the Scriptural accounts of the incarnation and whole process of Christ in Judea; but it also receives his internal appearance, consents to his operation, and concurs with it.

That faith which stands wholly upon hearsay, tradition, reading, or imagination, is but a distant kind of ineffectual credence, which permits the soul to remain in the bondage of corruption. The wicked may go this length towards gospel faith; but the true faith lays hold of, and cleaves to the spirit of truth, in its inward manifestations; wherein it stands, and whereby it grows, till the heart is

* 1 Cor. xii. 9. and Col. ii. 12.

† 2 Cor. iv. 13.

‡ 2 Tim. iii. 17.

purified, the world overcome, and salvation obtained.

This faith is as a flame of pure love in the heart to God. It presseth towards him, panteth after him, resigns to him, confides and lives in him. The mystery of it is held in a pure conscience,* and in the effective power of the everlasting gospel; whence the Christian dispensation, in holy writ, is often distinguished from the exterior dispensation of the Mosaic law, and the prior administration of angels in visible appearances, by the appellation of FAITH.

Though the term faith is occasionally used by the penmen of Scripture in divers, yet not contrary, but consistent senses, this seems to be the one standing faith mentioned, Eph. iv. 5, which is in Christ Jesus, as it is the fruit of his grace and good spirit in the heart. Through this the Scriptures become effectually instructive to the man of God, and helpful to the real Christian in the way of life and salvation. It is the faith by which the members of Christ truly live, and abide as such. It is their invincible shield; and the knowledge of Christ in them is the proof of their possessing it.† Abundance is said of the nature, power, and effects of this all-conquering faith; but I hope this will be sufficient to show, though, in its complete sense, it includes a belief of all that is said of Christ, and by Christ, in holy writ, it goes deeper, and ariseth not in man

* 1 Tim. iii. 9. † Rom. i. 17. Gal. ii. 20. and iii. 11. Heb. x. 38. Eph. vi. 16. 2 Cor. xiii. 5. Heb. xi.

merely from the man, but takes its birth, and receives its increase from the operation of the holy spirit in him; which works by it to the sanctification of the heart, and the production of every Christian virtue.

CHAPTER XIII.

1. Spiritual things how understood. The true gospel shown. 2. Concerning the economy of the Quakers, wherein the nature and manner of their worship is explained. 3. The Scriptures placed in their proper light. 4. Concerning revelation objective and subjective, immediate and instrumental.

1. "THE things of God knoweth no man, but the spirit of God;"* therefore the apostle declares, "We have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God."† "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."‡ Hence it is clear, that he who hath not the knowledge of spiritual things by the manifestation of the spirit of God, hath not the true knowledge of them, imagine what he will of his other acquirements; and he must find himself at last upon the sandy foundation of vain opinion.

The apostle follows this by asserting, "The spirit-

* 1 Cor. ii. 11.

† Verse 12.

‡ Verse 14.

ual man judgeth all things.”* That is, the man who is rendered spiritual, by the renewing influence of the holy spirit, has, through the shining of Divine light upon his mind, a clear discerning of all those spiritual matters it concerns him to know; which it is impossible for the natural man rightly to comprehend.

We read, that “life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel.”† But what is this life and immortality? Did not mankind believe in a future state before the incarnation of Christ? Yes, certainly. Both Jews and Gentiles believed and held the truth of it. What life and immortality then is that which is peculiar to the gospel, and which it is its peculiar property to unveil? It consists not wholly in the relation of the external procedure and doctrines of our Lord, but mainly in that spiritual gift he procured for us through his sufferings, which is the life and power that the immortal spirit of God manifests in the believing and obedient soul; that spirit which quickens those who have been dead in trespasses and sins, and therein alienated from the life of God.‡ The very essence of the gospel, is the issuing forth of this spirit of life to the hearts of men. “Keep thy heart with all diligence,” saith the wise man, “for out of it are the issues of life.”§ This teacheth that these living issues arise in the heart of man, but not from the heart itself. Was it so, the heart or soul would be its own quickener

* 1 Cor. ii. 15. † 2 Tim. i. 10. ‡ Eph. iv. 18. § Prov. iv. 23.

and saviour, and Christ would be excluded as such; but he alone is the way, the truth, and the life;* therefore the issuings of life to the heart are from the spirit, and in and through it by his spirit. The Divine influence of it is the life of the soul, that which renders it living; and void of this, it cannot be in a gospel sense, a living soul. It may endure to eternity, but mere duration is not this Divine life. To exist without this life, is to be scripturally dead; it is therefore requisite for the soul to wait for, feel after, and find this immortal life, and also to keep to it with all diligence, that it may experience the daily issues thereof to its comfort and preservation; and to be as “a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”†

I understand the propitiatory sacrifice of our Saviour, by which he opens the door of reconciliation for us, to be the initiatory part of man's salvation, and the internal work of regeneration by his spirit, to be its actual completion; for thereby an entrance is administered into the heavenly kingdom.

No man can have the influence of the inspired sentiments of the book of God, without receiving those inspired sentiments, which I have sufficiently shown, no man hath who reads without the inspiring power. Every reader hath only his own conceptions about the sentiments inspired of God, and not those real sentiments, without a degree of inspiration from him; which the manifest mistakes

* John xiv. 6.

† John iv. 14.

and contradictions of many demonstrate they are strangers to.

2. The people called Quakers give such preference to the Scriptures above all other writings, that they strictly press the frequent reading of them, and call for answers at every quarterly-meeting throughout the Society, and at the general yearly-meetings, from every particular quarterly-meeting, whether the holy Scriptures are constantly read in their families, or not; which they neither do, nor ever did, respecting any of their own writings, or any others.

They recommend silence and stillness in their religious assemblies; and as our manner of worship is misunderstood by many, and often treated with ridicule, I shall take this opportunity to offer some explanation of it.

We look upon Divine worship to be the most solemn act the mind of man is capable of being engaged in; and in consideration of the high and inconceivable majesty of Almighty God, think it our duty to approach him with the greatest reverence. Every thinking person, who is in any degree sensible of the love and fear of God, must esteem it an awful thing, to present himself to the especial notice of the infinite omnipresent eternal Being. Under a sense of this, the wise man adviseth, "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God" or enters upon worship, "and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools; for they

consider not that they do evil. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God ; for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth, therefore let thy words be few.”* He well knew, as he expresses, that both “the preparation of the heart, and the answer of the tongue is from the Lord.”† This accords with what our Saviour saith, “Without me ye can do nothing.”‡ We, therefore, cannot perform Divine worship acceptably but by his assistance. This must be received in spirit ; for, saith the apostle, “The spirit also helpeth our infirmities ; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought.”§ This being as certainly our case, as it was that of the apostles and primitive believers, it is incumbent on us to wait for that spirit which is requisite to help our infirmities, in order to pray as we ought. No forms of devotion of men’s invention can supply the place of the spirit. The same apostle further saith, “Through him we both have access, by one spirit unto the Father.”|| Seeing therefore, that both our help and access is through the spirit of Christ, the renewal of which is at his pleasure, and not ours, we must necessarily wait for it. This waiting must be in stillness of mind from the common course of our thoughts, from all wandering imaginations, and also in silence from the expression of words ; for the utterance of words is not waiting, but acting.

* Eccles. v. 1.

† Prov. xvi. 1.

‡ John xv. 5.

§ Rom. viii. 26.

|| Eph. ii. 18.

Words are requisite to convey the sense of one person to another, but not to that omniscient Being who is an universal spirit, and every where Almighty; who therefore stands not in need, either of the use of corporeal organs, instruments, or the sound of words, to communicate with the spirit of man.

If, in order to worship, the mind do not settle into stillness, the passions will be at work, and may agitate it into enthusiastic heats, and vague imaginations. But in true stillness, and singleness of soul towards God, they are silenced and subjected. The still small voice of the inspirer of all good then comes to be heard, and the mind being closely engaged in attention thereunto, and answering it in faith and humble submission, feels Divine life and love spring up, and receives ability therein, truly to worship the great author of its existence, and heavenly supplier of its wants, with a devotion no forms can reach.

This worship is not entered upon by totally laying aside our faculties, and falling into a senseless stupor, as superficial observers have imagined; but by a real introversion of mind, and an attention fixed singly upon the alone object of all adoration, in patient yet fervent desire after him. Thus, according to the Hebrew, the experienced psalmist advises, "Be silent to the Lord, and wait patiently for him;"* and respecting his own practice, he saith, "Truly

* Psal. xxxvii. 7.

my soul is silent upon God," adding this cogent reason, "from him cometh my salvation."* Verse 5, he applies the exhortation to himself, "My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him." Great encouragement he had thus to wait, as appears, Psalm xl. where he saith, "I waited patiently for the Lord, and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings; and he hath put a new song into my mouth, even praise unto our God." This was no new song in itself, but being sensibly renewed to him in his acceptable waiting, he, with sufficient propriety, styles it so.

To the same practical and profitable doctrine Jeremiah bears testimony. "It is good that a man should both hope, and quietly wait for the salvation," or saving help, "of the Lord. It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. He sitteth alone, and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him."†

Silent waiting was in practice among the prophets, and those that attended them, as appears in the prophecy of Ezekiel. We find the spirit of the prophet was engaged in Divine vision, whilst the elders of Judah sate before him, as it is described from the 1st verse of the viiith chapter, to the 4th of the xith chapter. During the time of which vision, it cannot be consistently supposed, that he

* Psal. lxii. 1.

† Lam. iii. 26, 27, 28.

was either speaking to them, or they to him, or to each other. This was not a singular instance of their meeting together; for it was the manner of God's people to congregate with the prophets, as that close apprehension plainly indicates. "They come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them."*

In this solemn practice, we have often been enabled thankfully to acknowledge the verity of that gracious declaration of our Lord, "Where two or three are gathered together, in my name, there am I in the midst of them;"† the fulfilling of that promise, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength;"‡ the certainty of that assertion, "The Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him;"§ and the necessity and authority of that just command, "Be still, and know that I am God."||

As silent waiting appears to us, in the first place, requisite to the worship of God in spirit and truth, it is always our practice, for we believe he ought to have the direction of our hearts therein; and if he please to influence any one, under due preparation, vocally to appear, either by way of address to himself in prayer, or to us in preaching, we never preclude such appearances, but silently assist according to our measures. If it prove that none are so con-

* Ezek. xxxiii. 31

‡ Lam. iii. 25.

† Mat. xviii. 20.

|| Psal. xlvi. 10.

‡ Isa. xl. 31.

cerned to speak, we sit the time through in silence, wherein true mental worship is often experienced; but never appoint any meeting, with intent, that it shall be held throughout in silence, as some have mistakenly imagined; for we believe that all ought to be led and guided by the good spirit of God, more especially in the solemn acts of Divine worship. It would be a happy thing, were all so led, amongst us as well as others; but the case appears otherwise with too many, who sit unconcerned, in expectation of hearing the ministry, instead of waiting upon God, and therefore often meet with disappointment. The apostle said in his age, "they are not all Israel, which are of Israel."* So we must acknowledge, all who have descended from faithful ancestors, are not themselves faithful; but the defect is in themselves, and not in the principle.

3. We profess, that the spirit of truth ought to be our, and every man's leader; and that this spirit is an infallible principle, and that so far as any faithfully follow it, they are infallibly led, and no further; but we never did, nor do profess that all in society with us are so led, or even sufficiently seek to be so. Nor was it the case amongst the primitive Christians themselves. We well know, and freely own, that we have all sinned, and come short of the glory of God, and that without repentance and regeneration, we must for ever fall short of it. We are also sensible, that upon due con-

* Rom. ix. 6.

fession, submission, and sincere obedience to the manifestations of Christ, the light of men, "he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness;"* and if we "walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."†

With regard to the Scriptures, I have declared our sense concerning them; and shall only add, that we hold them to be the best written standard of belief and practice that we know of in the world. We venerate them for the sake of the great Author they came from, and seek to him for the right understanding and proper use of them; believing him who alone can open the true sense of them, and accompany it with power to enable us effectually to put it in practice, to be the primary guide, and therefore ought always to have our principal attention; ever esteeming ourselves in duty bound, in the first place, to look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.‡ As "the life is more than meat, and the body than raiment,"§ so is the immediate influence of the spirit of Christ more than the Scriptures, or than any man's, or people's private or partial interpretation of them; from whence have arisen all the differences that subsist about them, and which must ever remain to be the case, till the holy spirit itself is applied and attended to, as the right interpreter, and supreme standard of

* 1 John i. 9. † Verse 7. ‡ Heb. xii. 2. § Luke xii. 23.

faith and practice. This is the original essential primary guide; and that revelation which comes immediately from the spirit of God into a man's heart, is certainly the primary one; and that which he receives through instrumental means, is as certainly but a secondary one.

4. Barclay distinguishes revelation into objective, and subjective, and sometimes he speaks of the one, and sometimes of the other. In order to show the propriety of this distinction, let me observe, that the soul of man hath not only a faculty of cogitation, by which it ordinarily thinks, unites, divides, compares, or forms ideas, but also a latent power of internal sensation, or of perceiving spiritual objects by an inward and spiritual sense, when presented through a proper medium; which, till the beams of Divine light shine upon it, it must be as totally unacquainted with, as the child in its mother's womb is with its faculties of sight and hearing. For though in that situation, it may be completely formed, and possess every organ proper to corporeal sensation, yet it is not empowered to exercise them, or really to know it hath them, till it be brought forth into the medium necessary to the use of them, composed of the light and air of this world. Then it first finds the peculiar sense, and exercise of those natural powers, which, before its birth, it could not have the least understanding, or proper use of. In like manner, the natural man must be delivered out of his natural darkness, into

the luminous and quickening influence of that Divine word, or spirit, which is most emphatically styled the true light and life of men. Thus born of the spirit, into this proper medium of Divine knowledge, the soul is made acquainted with that spiritual sense it could neither discover, nor believe pertained to it, whilst in its natural state. This is no new natural faculty added, but its own mental power newly opened, and brought into its due place and use.

Words are inadequate to the expression of this internal sense felt in the soul under Divine influence. It cannot be ideally conveyed to the understanding of the inexperienced; for it is not an image, but a sensation, impossible to be conceived but by its own impression. So true is that of the apostle, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him; but God hath revealed them unto us by his spirit."* It was upon this consideration that I said, Divine light is the subject of inward sensation, "and is not to be communicated from one to another by reasoning, or verbal description." For should any person give the most clear and lively description possible of the light of the sun, to a man blind from his birth, it would only be communicating an ideal notion of the light, but not the light itself. It might be called a subjective revelation concerning the light to him, but not an objective one of the light itself. This

* 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10.

no man can have but by his own immediate sensation.

Divine revelation is a disclosure of something to the rational mind by the Holy Ghost, not in the mind's own power to discover. This the holy spirit doth, either by unveiling of itself by its influence in some degree to the soul, and giving it an internal sense of its presence; or by favouring it with the vision of other objects, real or representative, through the communication of Divine light and power; or by giving the soul a clear sense of its own state and condition. All this being a discovery of objects, is called objective revelation.

Subjective revelation is a disclosure of subjects, or things relative, through the inspiration of the holy spirit; by which the mind is opened into the knowledge of the Divine will concerning persons or things, led into the true sense of Scriptures, or into a deeper understanding of doctrines than it could ever reach without Divine illumination. Of this kind was the original revelation of the Scriptures to those who penned them.

All this, both objective and subjective, is truly internal immediate revelation. What is now mockingly treated as the only revelation still existing, and to exist, is rather the fruit of revelation than the thing itself; a Scriptural record of things revealed, for they certainly were so to those to whom they were immediately disclosed; but the different senses put upon the many disputed parts

of them, for many generations past, demonstrate those parts are not truly a revelation to those who mistake them; nor can they ever become such to them, till they know the holy author to be their interpreter. For, "No prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time," or rather, at any time, "by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."*

CHAPTER XIV.

1. Impious idolaters, &c, not in Christ; but he appears in them as a swift witness. To whom he communicates saving knowledge. 2. The gospel comes not in word only, but in power, and Christ not only came outwardly, but also appears inwardly; and by the powerful operation of his spirit effects all our works in us. He is the real efficient of all good in man. 3. The gospel sensibly preached in every man. The office of the Spirit of Truth. 4. Concerning our terms of admission. 5. A day, or time of visitation to man demonstrated.

1. I BELIEVE that idolaters, and those guilty of immoralities, have all at times felt the reproofing witness of God in their consciences, which gives them a convicting knowledge of him; and if they continue to rebel against this light, they become so darkened towards it, that "they know not the ways thereof, nor abide in the paths thereof."† Not liking to retain God in their knowledge, after long forbearance, he gives them over to a reprobate mind.‡

* 2 Pet. i. 20 21.

† Job xxiv. 13.

‡ Rom. i. 28.

Our principle teaches, that the grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, first as a convictor, or convincer of sin. Thus it stands at the door of man's heart and knocks for entrance; and if the heart opens to it, and abides in the ability it furnishes, sincerely desiring, and seeking to obey its motions, it will, by due degrees, increase that ability therein, till it prove itself the power of God unto salvation to it. Then, and not till then, the mind is sensible of the saving knowledge of this Divine principle; yet, before this, whilst the soul knew nothing more of it than merely its convictions, it could not be said to be totally ignorant of an internal immediate sense of that grace which is saving, both in its nature and intention, though it was not endued with the saving knowledge of it.

2. We have all along uniformly acknowledged, the gospel came in word as well as in power; but not in word only, but also in power, even in the power of the Holy Ghost.* And we are sensible that this Divine power, from whence the words sprang, is the very essence of the gospel, and the words but the outward expression, or exterior declaration by which it is preached and recommended. To this essential internal grace, power and spirit of God, the apostles called and pressed their hearers, as well as to the belief of the outward advent and process of the Messiah then past. They

* 1 Thes. i. 5.

taught them, that "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin unto salvation."* This second appearance of Christ, we do not understand to intend his coming to judgment at the great day of general decision; for then he will come to determine the final state both of the righteous and unrighteous; not to salvation only, but to condemnation also. But this second appearance is in order to the salvation of those who look for him to that end. Accordingly, the apostle thus prays for the believers; "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ;"† and he describes the Corinthians as "waiting for the coming," or renewed appearance, "of our Lord Jesus Christ."‡

Notwithstanding our Saviour empowers and employs his messengers to declare his will, and to call people to the work of repentance and regeneration; yet he constitutes them not as deputies to do the work for him. It is not the words they deliver, nor any application man, by his own powers, can make of them, which can perform this great business. "Lord," saith the prophet, "thou wilt ordain peace for us; for thou also hast wrought all our works in us."§ The spirit of the High and Holy One is the true efficient of all the real good that is done, all the virtue that is wrought, either in the church in gen-

* Heb. ix. 28.

† Cor. i. 7.

‡ 2 Thes. iii. 5.

§ Isa. xxvi. 12.

eral, or any of its members. It is the spirit that (*a*) giveth understanding, and unveils the knowledge of the things of God; (*b*) quickeneth and maketh alive, (*c*) mortifies, (*d*) circumcises, (*e*) baptizes, (*f*) sanctifies, (*g*) regenerates, (*h*) sets free,

a "I said, days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom. But there is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding." Job xxxii. 7, 8. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his spirit; for the spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so, the things of God knoweth no man, but the spirit of God." 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10, 11.

b "It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing." John vi. 63. "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." 2 Cor. iii. 6. "If the spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his spirit that dwelleth in you." Rom. viii. 11.

c "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the spirit do mortify the deeds of the body ye shall live." Rom. viii. 13.

d "Circumcision is that of the heart in the spirit, and not in the letter." Rom. ii. 29.

e "By one spirit are we all baptized into one body." 1 Cor. xii. 13.

f "But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God." 1 Cor. vi. 11.

g "Except a man be born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the spirit, is spirit." John iii. 5, 6.

h "The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Rom. viii. 2.

(*i*) strengthens, and enables to obedience. In the spirit is (*k*) the true light, (*l*) the life, (*m*) the love, (*n*) the waiting, (*o*) the walking, (*p*) the fellowship and communion of the gospel; in the spirit (*q*) is true prayer made, (*r*) access to the throne of grace opened, and acceptable worship performed. The spirit is (*s*) the

i "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might, by his spirit, in the inner man." Eph. iii. 16.

k "In him was life, and the life was the light of men."—"That was the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." John i. 4, 9. "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." 2 Cor. iv. 6.

l "The spirit giveth life." 2 Cor. iii. 6.

m "Who also declared unto us your love in the spirit." Col. i. 8.

n "We through the spirit wait for the hope of righteousness, by faith." Gal. v. 5.

o "If we live in the spirit, let us also walk in the spirit." Gal. v. 25.

p "If any fellowship of the spirit." Phil. ii. 1, "Have been all made to drink into one spirit." 1 Cor. xii. 13.

q "The spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the spirit itself maketh intercession for us," &c. Rom. viii. 26. "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance." Eph. vi. 18. "Praying in the Holy Ghost." Jude 20.

r "Through him we both have access by one spirit unto the Father." Eph. ii. 18.

s "Wo to the rebellious children—that cover with a covering, but not of my spirit." Isa. xxx. 1.

covering of God's people, (*t*) their guide, (*u*) their leader, (*w*) their comforter, (*x*) their seal, the infelt earnest of an everlasting inheritance to them; and, in sum, the all-effective power and virtue of the gospel ministration; all which the Scriptures here cited undeniably evidence.

3. In all these respects the holy spirit operated in common amongst the primitive believers. For the continuation of the same spiritual operations it is that we plead, and not that of miraculous gifts; which were always extraordinary, and afforded but to few in comparison of the whole number of the primitives.

When any man does right, conscience approves, and when he does wrong it condemns him. This is generally called conscience, because it is something of God appearing in the mind, and giving it a conscious sense of right and wrong respecting its own

t "When he the spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth." John xvi. 13.

u "If ye be led of the spirit ye are not under the law." Gal. v. 18. "As many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Rom. viii. 14.

w "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the spirit of truth." John xiv. 16, 17.

x "God who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the spirit in our hearts." 2 Cor. i. 22. "In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy spirit of promise." Eph. i. 13. "Grieve not the holy spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." Ibid. iv. 30.

acts. No man could know it makes these just distinctions without a sense of them. What is inward conviction for evil but a sense of guilt? And, what is the genuine effect of guilt, but remorse? What does remorse lead to, but repentance? And what is repentance, but the doctrine of the gospel? Every rational creature under heaven, therefore, having this sensation, hath the gospel preached in him or her by this righteous principle, agreeable to Col. i. 23. But we always understand the natural conscience, and the light of God's spirit appearing in the conscience, as different principles.

Our Lord showed his disciples that the Spirit of Truth, the comforter, should not only bring to their remembrance what he had told them, show them things to come, and lead them into all truth; but it should likewise reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.* Whether this Divine visiter appears to the mind of man, in words, or without words, by the sensations of compunction and remorse; whether in the sharpness of reproof, or the healing touches of consolation; whether it manifests itself as light, or sheds its life and love into the heart; whether it darts upon it as lightning, or settles it in a holy serenity; fills it with faith, or inflames it with zeal: in all these ways, seeing it proceeds not by messenger, but by its own immediate communication to the rational soul of man, it is properly styled internal immediate revelation.

* John xv. and xvi.

This Divine principle is a living source of truth and virtue in man, without which, exterior laws and precepts would little avail; and when, through faithfulness thereunto, it is enlarged and advanced over all in the soul, it is found to be a sure foundation, which neither the wisdom of the wise, the reasonings of the confident, the jugglings of the crafty, the derision of the reviler, the rage of the persecutor, nor even the gates of hell can prevail against.

4. Our terms for the admission of members, are, a free and unforced conscientious acquiescence upon principle, with the essential doctrines of truth and real Christianity, and the rules of the society founded thereon, and not upon mere external appearances. The Divine principle itself is our bond of union, and the holy Scriptures are our articles. Christ once in the flesh, and always in spirit, are fundamentals with us. We require no subscription to articles of human invention.

As to differences in opinion amongst us; whilst professors of the same faith differ in years and experience, in capacity and opportunity, in education and associates, in faithfulness or unfaithfulness to their principles, there must be different opinions and practices. When the believers in the primitive age of Christianity grew numerous, it was the case amongst them, and in all societies ever since. What we assert is, that the one holy spirit leads all that faithfully follow it into sameness of doctrine, and unity of love; and that all who profess to be followers of Christ, ought to be led by his spirit; but that all, either of

our own society, or any other, are so led, we are far from asserting or believing.

5. Men ought carefully to embrace the day of their visitation, and follow the advice of our Saviour, who saith, "While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light."* This is the only way to escape the dreadful consequences of continuing in rebellion against it. And, is it not a comfort to all men, that they are allowed this opportunity?

That there is such a time and opportunity, and that it may be lost to apostatisers past redemption, is evident from that awful passage, Heb. vi. 4, 5, 6, "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted of the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come; if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame."

This passage evinces, 1st. That persons may become sensible partakers of the Holy Ghost, and taste of that Divine power which is the eternal life of the blessed in the world to come. 2d. That they may apostatise from this condition to such a degree, that repentance, and consequently salvation, shall become impossible to them. 3d. That they bring this upon themselves, because they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an

* John xii. 36.

open shame; they reject and rebel against the invitations of his spirit in themselves, till they occasion it to forsake them; whereby the Divine witness is spiritually crucified and slain as to its life in them, and the Christian name openly reproached through their evil conduct and example. This is further illustrated by a simile in the two succeeding verses. "For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God. But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned."* The rain that cometh oft upon the earth, denotes that the Divine visitation is frequently renewed to the soul of man; and the earth which drinketh it up, and bringeth forth herbs, the soul that affectionately receives, and faithfully retains it, so as to bring forth the fruits of the spirit, whereby it inherits the blessing of God's salvation. By the earth, which beareth thorns and briers, is pointed out the soul that so repeatedly continues to resist, and backslide from the Divine visiter, as to bring forth, and abide in, wicked works, which occasions him to reject and forsake it; the consequence whereof must be its final condemnation and destruction.

This portion of Scripture thus demonstrates, both the certainty of a day of Divine visitation to the souls of men, and the possibility of its being discontinued, whilst they remain in the body.

* Heb. vi. 7 and 8.

CHAPTER XV.

1. The essential gospel. 2. Christ the light and life of men before his incarnation. These terms not to be confined to his corporeal appearance upon earth. 3. Nor to the Scriptures. What their proper use is. 4 and 5. Of Christ, the Word. 6. A material difference between light afforded in order to salvation, and a real embracing of it so as to be saved by it. Christ as truly the light of the souls of men, as the sun is to their bodies, whether they keep their eyes open to it, or shut them against it. 7. Christ as the Divine Word, the creating, upholding, and saving power of God to mankind: the elect, the gracious administrator of life and salvation, through his external sacrifice, and by the communication of his spirit. The true sense of unlearned writers, not to be ascertained by the rules of grammar or criticism. 8. The kingdom of God is within, Luke xvii. The true Christian is the temple of Christ, wherein he manifests himself by his spirit. 9. What the kingdom of God is.

1. WITHOUT troubling myself with the unnecessary pedantry of etymologies, I shall say, we allow the word gospel, in an extended sense, may include both the mystery and the history, the inward and outward process of our Saviour; for the gospel comes not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost.* We believe this power of the Holy Ghost to be the internal essential part, and the words the exterior, declarative, and occasional expression of it. We admit the history, metonymically to a share in the title, but not to engross it; lest the power, which is the life and reality of it, should be excluded, and people be deceived into a

* 1 Thes. i. 5.

belief, that the gospel essentially consists of nothing but words.

We are far from denying, that Paul, Peter or any other true minister or messenger of Christ, preached the gospel, when, by inspiration, they preached concerning the historical process of Christ; but we cannot allow, that this comprehends the whole of the gospel they preached. For we read in their writings, that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation, and that it shines as a light in the heart, to give the knowledge of the glory of God.* The doctrines of the gospel, are also called the gospel, and preaching of them, is termed preaching the gospel; but it is evident, neither the history nor the doctrines, are the essential gospel intended in Gal. i. For, we find, after the apostle had said, "If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed,"† he shows what he meant by the gospel they had received, in 11, 12, 15, and 16th verses: "I certify you brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me, is not after man. For, I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."—"But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach Him among the heathen, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood." The gospel here intended, is plainly the immediate revelation of the Son of

* 2 Cor. iv. 6.

† Gal. i. 9.

God within him, and neither an historical nor doctrinal relation of things without him. It is against the oppugners of this internal essential gospel which is not of man, nor by man, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ within man, that the apostle twice pronounces, anathema.

In demonstration of this gospel spirit and power,* Paul preached, that the faith of his hearers might be fixed in this power of God, and not in the private interpretations of men's wisdom. His fellow-labourers preached under the influence of the same Divine power, which pricked their hearers in their heart;† and so must all that ever truly preach the gospel. The apostle declares, he would know not the speech of them that are puffed up, but the power. For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power.‡ This everlasting power is the spirit of the gospel, wherein it mainly and most essentially consists; as the essentiality of the man doth in the rational soul; and the words and matters preached or written, are as the body, or present outside. 2 Tim. iii. The apostle describes what kinds of men those would be who, "having a form of godliness, would deny the power;" and directs "from such turn away."

We read, 2 Cor. iv. 3, &c.: "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glori-

* 1 Cor. xii. † Acts ii. 4, 5, 37. ‡ 1 Cor. iv. 19, 20.

ous gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus's sake. For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Here the apostle teaches, that the gospel they preached was Christ, showing his face, or manifesting himself as the image of God in their hearts; and that it was only hid, or obscured in the minds of those, who through unbelief therein, or unfaithfulness thereto, were become blinded towards it by him who is called the God of this world, because he is obeyed by those who walk according to the course of this world.*

2. The prophecy of the gospel-covenant declares "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts." — "For they shall all know me from the least of them, to the greatest of them."† This could not intend the knowledge of Christ incarnate; for that appearance was too exterior, and of too short duration. Nor could it mean the knowledge of the Scriptures; for a man may know them from beginning to end, believe them to be true, and frame his practice according to his apprehensions of the sense of them, and yet not know the Lord. The Jews had the law, the prophets, and the Scriptures extant in their time; yet the Almighty by the

* Eph. ii. 2.

† Jer. xxxi. 33, 34.

mouth of the same prophet, declares, "My people are foolish, they have not known me."* Nor was it passible they should without Divine assistance; therefore he saith, "I will give them a heart to know me."† And in Ezekiel, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." — "I will put my spirit within you."‡ Thus the true knowledge of God is to be received, by the internal writing of the Divine word in the heart, which puts the law of light and life within man, and thereby lighteth every man coming, or that cometh, into the world.

3. To imagine the universal light and life of the immortal Word is at all meant of the Scriptures, is absurd. For it appears to have been at least two thousand four hundred years after the creation, before any part of the Scriptures were written; and the several pieces that compose them, were occasionally written at divers times, and by different penmen; taking up about sixteen hundred and thirty years more, from the publication of the first of them by Moses, to the last by John the Divine; considering also, that the abundantly greater part of mankind in these latter ages, since they have appeared in Christendom, have never yet had them; and how many millions therein, have been wickedly debarred from the use of them in their own language, by an interested and designing priesthood; it undeniably appears, that a vast majority of man-

* Jer. iv. 22.

† Jer. xxiv. 7.

‡ Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27.

kind never had the benefit of them. And, amongst those who are favoured with them, the variety, and even contrariety of opinions and practices which have all along subsisted, especially among the high pretenders to, and possessors of literature, all contribute to demonstrate, that though the sacred records, opened by the spiritual key of David, are profitable and excellent above all other writings, yet a more adequate universal guide than themselves, ever hath been, and now is, absolutely necessary to the salvation of mankind.

4. John i. 1. The evangelist shows first, what the Word, Christ, was in himself, and asserts he was God; and next what he was in and to the world. First, he was the Creator of all things; and second, the light of men; and both these he was in the beginning,* or early part of time to this creation, four thousand years before his coming in the flesh. As he then began to be the light of men, he hath all along continued to be so. As he made the sun to be the light of our external world, whether people keep their eyes open, or shut them against its shining; so is he the true light of the spirit of men, whether they open to him, or not. This he is by the inward manifestation of his spirit in every man's conscience. "In him was life, and the life was the light of men."† This was in the beginning, and hath been from the beginning. It is the one living eternal Word or energetic spirit, appearing in both

* John i. 3, 4.

† Verse 4.

modes, when truly believed in and properly received.

5. "The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not."* "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not." I take the darkness to be the corrupt state of mankind, Gentiles as well as Jews.

6. Those who did not receive him, could never be born of him; for he that is born of him, is both enlightened and quickened by his spirit. The Saviour, as the light of the world, dispenseth of his light to every man that cometh into the world, to give him a sight of his captive condition; this sight producing that godly sorrow which worketh repentance,† salvation ensues. So, though the light of the Saviour ariseth upon all, in order that all may come to repentance and be saved, yet those who are so attached to their evil courses, that they love darkness rather than light, shut it out from them, and therefore do not come to the saving knowledge of him, who is the author of eternal salvation to all that obey him.‡

When we speak of the light's being of a saving nature, we do not intend, that salvation is effected merely by light abstractly considered, though it is the light of life. The eternal Word operates both as light and as life. It gives true discovery and discrimination, as light; and empowers to live and act suitably, as life. This light and life being the

* John i. 5.

† 2 Cor. vii. 10.

‡ Heb. v. 9.

very nature of the Saviour, are properly said to be of a saving nature. Men may be so enlightened as to see the way of salvation, and yet refuse to walk in it; yea, they may be led into the way, yet not abide in it. Will their refusal or defection, alter the nature of the light, or prove it is not saving? Would any shutting out the light, be a proof that it would not shine upon me; or of the contrary? Food is not such to him who refuses to eat it; but is it not food in its nature, because he refuses it? And might it not be food to him if he would be wise enough to take it?

7. "In the beginning was the Word."* This divine Word had no beginning. It was no part of the creation. All created things were made by him, and called from inexistence into being; but the Word is without beginning or end of days. The Word inexpressible by words, and incomprehensible by thoughts and imaginations. The *orthos logos* or *right reason*, infinite in wisdom, goodness and power; from the beginning issuing forth and acting in the work of creation and providence, and also from the time of the fall, in mediation and regeneration.

As man was the only part of this lower creation designed for immortality, the favours he then received, were answerable to the high purpose of his Maker in creating him. The creating and conserving Word, immediately became his illuminator, and

* John i. 1.

quickener. "All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men."*

After man's transgression and defection from this Divine light and life, this gracious Word astonishingly condescended to offer himself to repair the breach; by determining, in due time, to take the nature of man upon him, and to give it up to excruciating pains and the death of the cross, as a propitiation for the sins of the whole world. Hereby he showeth the greatness of Divine love and mercy to poor helpless man, and also, by then immediately renewing, and thenceforward continuing to afford a manifestation of his light to man in his fallen estate. For, before his incarnation, "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not."† The generality, though they felt his inward convictions, the reproofs of instruction, distinguished them not to be his, but might flatter themselves, they were only the effects of tradition early instilled into their minds; and not having their habitation in the light, were become as darkness; yet the light shined in their darkness, though their darkness comprehended it not.‡ They thought too meanly of this light, had no just conception of it, knew it not to be the visitation of the Son of God; and though they were his own, Gentiles as well as Jews, by creation and intentional redemption, they received

* John i. 3, 4.

† Verse 10.

‡ Verse 5.

him not. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God."*

The evangelist having spoken of him as the universal, illuminating, effective Word, verse 14, he comes to speak of his incarnation, saying, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." We are not here to understand, that the sovereign Word, or Spirit, was transubstantiated into flesh; but that for man's redemption, he took the nature of man upon him, and appeared amongst men, as a man, and undoubtedly in the eyes of most, seemed not more than man; but saith his enlightend follower; "and we beheld his glory," had a sense of his divinity, as well as a sight of his humanity, "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father," the only one of his own essence and eternity, "full of grace and truth — and of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.†

When persons read and presume to expound the Scriptures, with school and college-methods uppermost in their heads, it is no wonder they mistake them. The inspired writers observed no such rules, even those of them who might have a competent share of literature; which most of them had not. Learned, or unlearned, the light and motion of the holy spirit was their guide; not the rules of rhetoric, logic, or grammar. Not school-learning, but the light of the Holy Ghost gave them a right understanding, and the same is requisite to

* John i. 11, 12.

† Verse 16.

the right understanding of their writings. They spake not the wisdom of this world;* therefore are not to be understood by its wisdom, yet nothing is more busy to explain them. They often treat of things promiscuously; even as our Saviour himself spoke, intermixing the internal spiritual sense with the external, both respecting himself, and the matters he touched upon. This John doth in his first chapter, sometimes speaking of Christ as the Word, which respects his divinity, sometimes as man, or as in the flesh, and sometimes comprehending both senses in the same words. For want of a right understanding properly to distinguish them, men are apt to jumble, and mistake one for another. Hence arise disagreement, clashing, and jangling about the true sense of Scripture; and trying it by the notions of systems they have espoused, instead of trying them by the truth, it is no wonder there is so much controversy. The only way to put an end to it, is for all to come to the spirit of truth in their own hearts, that they may be led into all truth; which till they do, they never can be.

8. "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation, neither shall they say, lo here or lo there; for behold the kingdom of God is within you." Christ appears by his spirit in the minds of all, either as a comforter, a purifier, or a convicter and reprover, in order that they might believe in, and obey him under this appearance, through which

* 1 Cor. ii. 6.

they would find him to become the hope of glory in them.

In matters of such high concern as relate to our eternal state, it is incumbent upon all, to be more cautious than confident about the exclusion of their fellow-creatures from the grace and salvation of God; lest by asserting the non-existence of that experience in others themselves have not yet known, they become of those to whom our Saviour declares, "Ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering, to go in."*

9. If any ask, what is the kingdom of heaven, or of God? I answer; notwithstanding he is the Almighty Sovereign of the universe, yet that is more peculiarly styled his kingdom, wherein he so completely governs as to be always cheerfully and perfectly obeyed; where he is the sole mover of all that is done, where he is glorified in all that is done, and where he communicates of his glory and felicity without mixture. This kingdom can neither be entered nor at all seen into by man, but through the new-birth of the holy spirit, whereby the soul experienceth a being born into it; a being delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of the dear Son of God.† Hereby alone the spirit of man enters it; and through faithfulness, is enabled to make advances therein whilst in the body. This kingdom stands not in locality, not in

* Mat. xxiii. 13.

† John iii. Col. i. 13

any *here* or *there*; therefore it is in vain to direct to it by *lo here* or *lo there*. It stands in an infinite and heavenly spirit, life, and nature, wherein nothing impure can live or enter. It is the internal dominion, or ruling power of the Holy Ghost in men and angels; that pure influence so beautifully and sublimely described in Wisdom vii., flowing from the glory of the Almighty, which in all ages entering into holy souls, maketh them friends of God and the prophets. In fine, this kingdom of God is the dominion of the light and life of the spirit of God. Whoever lives under the sensible influence and government of it, lives in this kingdom. This is the kingdom of the saints militant on earth, and of the saints triumphant in heaven; it being experienced by the sanctified in Christ Jesus, in part whilst in this world, and enjoyed in its fulness in the world to come.

I shall now close, sincerely wishing that all men may come really to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, that they may experience life eternal.

THE END.

